THE POT OF GOLD

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The Pot of Gold

By
GEORGE CLARKE PECK

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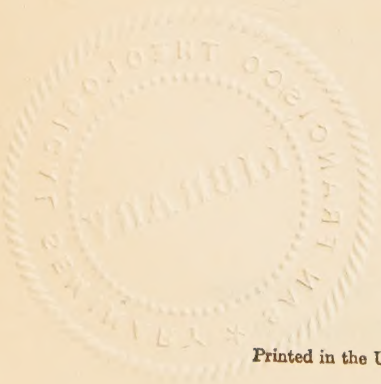

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The Pot of Gold

My word for it, The Pot of Gold is there always—at the Foot of the Rainbow, as the ancients fancied. In some ways those unsophisticated folk had the advantage of us. They believed more. Even though they failed to light upon the gold just where the rainbow touches the ground, still were they sure of its rewarding presence. For sincere and brave questors it always waits. Gold; fine gold, and a-plenty. It may not be the sort of coin with which you can buy groceries or pay rent. All the better for that. It is king's gold. It passes current anywhere in the realm of the heart. And when you enrich yourself with it you rob none else. Like the oil which wasted not it forever brims the pot. But it is found at the foot of the rainbow only. Which implies rain in the air. Moreover, the sun must be out. Not with a lantern shall you successfully hunt for the pot of gold. You may need to travel far—though not always. Of a surety the gleaming riches will reward your search —treasures of memory, of hope, of truth, of hidden meaning, of beautiful intent, or radiant dream, of perdurable friendship, of the veiled God—at the foot of the rainbow.

I

THAT OLD CHIMNEY OF MINE

LITERALLY speaking, it is not mine. None of my money is represented in it. My hands laid none of its bricks. Not once have I kindled a fire on its hearth or warmed cold hands before it. And yet I make free to call it mine with an ownership which defrauds no one else—that old chimney of mine. Why not, pray? That is a narrow, besotting sort of claim which presupposes the right to dispose of a property. When it comes to *that* I might as well admit, whether with chagrin or pride, and as many of my cloth have boasted, "no foot of land do I possess." Not a foot, not even a lot in a cemetery. Even so are my liabilities shortened along with my assets. The proprietorship I am alleging involves no taxes. Yet will I allow none to dispute my claim—nor I theirs.

Part of the waving wealth of every field is mine, all that I can carry off in eye and heart, whenever I pass that way. Corn tassels nod to me as to a veritable lord of the manor. Hollyhocks and daffodils curtsey to me. Pines wave their long, graceful arms in saluta-

tion. Crimson ramblers flutter at my approach and welcome me with incense such as never was swung in censers. Not mine, do you say? In legal sense I never owned so much water as a frog-pond. Yet I lay unblushing claim to the Seven Seas. Have I not paid landlubbers' tribute to them, and swallowed as much as an inexpert swimmer can hold? Haven't I sailed like a king over them, and played, as familiar friend, in their shallows? At the least I shall match my claim against any other. Why, even the stars are mine: mystery, splendor,—all. Many a time, when none other was looking, they've winked at me in most familiar fashion. So far as mere numbers go, the Milky Way counts stars enough to allot one for each earth-tenant, with hundreds of millions to spare. But I ask no exclusive ownership. I claim *all;* Sirius, Orion, Vega, Evening Star, Morning Star; and the one that blesses me most deeply is most truly mine.

Nor when it comes to man-made wonders—books, sonatas, paintings—am I more modest. The mental treasures of the Congressional Library are mine for the asking. What though I may not literally carry them home with me? None will gainsay my right to take out all that my mind can hold. No fault but mine if I am poor. Translators are my confederates, putting

ancient riches within my reach. And music? To tell the embarrassing truth, the music scores of all the masters would profit me as little as would an airship or an undeciphered Rosetta Stone. But the music itself: the hazardous harmonies of Grieg, the plaints of Beethoven, the storm and maze of Lizst, the lilt of Chopin—these belong to me who cannot read a bar of them. They have become part of me, as the light and dew which a plant absorbs. One of my friends has invested a fortune in canvases. And yet I am not envious of him. His the worry of outright ownership; his the risks and the insurance premiums. Mine the untaxed felicity of gazing until my eyes ache with beauty. I am glad it falls not to my lot to play curator of the British Museum, The Louvre, or even the Smithsonian Institution. I should not want the custody of so much wealth and wonder. He must stay with his charges, and feel condemned by the world at large when La Giaconda disappears. I come and go at will, like a prince, thrilled, enriched, dazed with the magnitude of my possessions. Much was made, a few years ago, of the project of taking down a famous European castle and rebuilding it in America. But why so much expense when any lover of such things may transport with him, duty free, in his soul, the

Taj Mahal, Westminster Abbey, Trajan's Arch, Napoleon's Tomb and the Pyramids?

I envy the man who can enrich a world in such fashion. I do not pretend to understand the psychology of a Correggio, a Michael Angelo, or a Rodin. Doubtless he is of like passions with the rest of us: capable of feud and jealousy and vice. But I should expect him to be awed by his almost deific gift. He creates—for mankind. He brings into being beauty and majesty that were not before. He calls into the void, and his masterpieces make answer. In a way he ought to be qualified to understand God whose joy is writ in every meadow, sunset, and cataract. How petty looks every other achievement as contrasted with gifts of creative skill to the world! The amassing of dollars, the getting of votes, the winning of a soft place on earth; I would trade all such for the privilege of writing a song that the world would sing after I had forgot that I wrote it; or of publishing a book, reading which multitudes might smart less or more, and might aspire and break bounds; or of rearing a temple under whose arches they should find God and cease to be paltry; or of building myself into another life as a mother does.

But, failing of *that* distinction, I need not go lean all my days. The world is mine for

instruction, for qualifying, for opulence of manhood. "It is perhaps a more fortunate destiny," says Stevenson in his *Lay Morals*, "to have a taste for collecting shells than to be born a millionaire—to learn an interest than to make a thousand pounds. To become a botanist, a geologist, an antiquary, or an artist is to enlarge one's possessions in the universe by an incalculably higher degree, and by a far surer test of property, than to purchase a farm of thirty acres." With a little such encouragement (or without it) I shall continue to be a prospector, plying my spade where it pleases me; in galleries, fields, faces; by roadways, monuments, counters; in out-of-the-way corners, or gazing into the far-reaches of the sky. Inveterate and inconsequent, like most, I am out for treasure, taking which I rob none else but, rather, increase the sum of human riches. And whatever gold I dig up or wash free of its dirt is mine.

In such spirit I appropriated the old chimney referred to. You shall find it, if you will, just where I left it, on a quiet road, somewhere "down East." Perchance it would not win from *you* a second glance. Well and good. I do not quarrel with your lack of interest in my old chimney. Your indifference simply strengthens my personal claim; declares the

object *mine*, not *yours*. Merely a plain, old chimney, weatherbeaten and crumbling in places, yet upstanding a few paces back from the road. Stained by storm, scorched by flame yet erect—and with a history, of course. A history, of course. Every *thing*, every *event*, every *body* roots back. When we refer to a man or woman—particularly a woman—"with a past," we are wont to lift our eyebrows and shrug our shoulders and look unutterably. But why bedevil a perfectly respectable phrase? Why assume that a "past" is sinister? Without a "past" there is no "present." As well omit the antecedents of modern printing press and Diesel engine and expect to understand them. Sometimes I think that history is the most vital branch of learning. Even the pebble at my feet has a history—memories of mountain summits, of grinding glaciers, and age-long attrition. The meanest flower that blows may trace its lineage to the time of the Pharaohs. Had it articulate voice, what a romance it could tell of sun, soil, and shower. Lacking the history of it, who can make sense of French Revolution or German militarism or industrial ferment? Drop into his age a Washington or a Cavour, a Marx or a Kropotkin, and he means nothing, knows nothing, feels nothing. Like building a Cheops on

Broadway or a subway in Egypt. Given the history of a movement or a man—even so, we may not understand either; but denied the history, we cannot even *hope* to understand. We are mariners adrift without compass, sextant, or north star.

So my old chimney beside the road has a history of course. I do not know it—which leaves me free to dream and conjecture. Excuse me: 'tis a house-chimney, most obviously. In my haste to assert claim to it I omitted to state its genus. Folks do not erect that sort of structure as monument to nothing in particular. Once it had been part of a dwelling. There was the fireplace just a few feet above ground, opening into a living-room, doubtless. And holes for smoke pipes from kitchen stove and bedroom-heater. And plain marks of a gabled roof, and scars where the flashing had been torn away. From the chimney I could say how many stories high the house had been. Not a timber remained, nor a scrap of iron. Just the foundations—and the piteous chimney. Yet had I half the reconstructive imagination of the archæologist, who, upon the basis of a bone or two, builds again some prehistoric denizen of deep or forest, I could visualize, at least, the entire dwelling whose chimney survived.

Of this much alone I make sure: it was somebody's *home*. Originally it was built to be that, while its future occupants watched every joist set in place and every shingle nailed. Prayers and hopes and love went into it, along with lath and plaster. Affection was to nest there and rear its young. Children were to play there, and the dead to lie, in white state, in its parlor. Somebody's home! I know that building materials do not constitute a home more than "stone walls a prison make or iron bars a cage." By way of winning customers for its products, an enterprising firm used to advertise its ability to "make any house a home." Merely a matter of radiators of the most approved type and properly installed. If a house lacks aught of being homelike, put in a steamheating system. More recently, talking machines are similarly recommended. Whereas, as every tyro ought to know, it takes trust and troth and truth to make a home. Wanting an atmosphere of such attributes, the most homelike-looking structure ever reared is a mausoleum. I remembered thus as I glimpsed my old chimney. And I choose to believe that, away off there, in the open country, a mile from the nearest village store, with no land-development scheme to hinder, the dwelling of which a chimney alone remained was set up

for a *home*. Not for rent or for speculative investment, but as home for its builder. Nowadays matters are altered. Nowadays we have apartment houses almost like rabbit warrens; and "daylight homes" constructed by the hundred, in monotonous rows, and all as much alike as cells in a prison. Nowadays the thing is done for us by an aspiring capitalist or an improvement company. Nowadays all that remains for us is to purchase a ready-made and papered structure, move in and begin to inhabit. That's the way the majority are housed nowadays. *Housed* but not deeply *homed*. Nomads in reality; "Van-dwellers," as a clever little volume described us, a few years ago. We are rapidly degenerating into a nation of tenants, landlorded as badly as the Irish, and without even the Irishman's precarious attachment to the soil. Moreover, things look brighter for Ireland—and more foreboding here. We are forever on the move, feverishly questing better housing for the same money, or the same comfort for less money; scarcely owning the beds we sleep on. Furnished Apartments, Family Hotels, Housekeeping-made-easy—these are the slogans. This is the *zeitgeist*. Nothing short of revolution will change it perhaps.

Nevertheless, I hold that there is no sub-

stitute for the home-building instinct which, normally, we share with the lower animals. Only cuckoos and certain other ill-favored birds are content with nests of strangers' building. Even the chimney swallow gathers her own twigs and straw. Whereas we, with the nesting impulse at the highest, living in the midst of splendors and multitudinous conveniences that are our modern boast, hived in huge centers where fortunes are made and lost in a day, are rapidly becoming a homeless people. I am not referring at all to the "housing problem" of which so much has been heard since the War. In its way that problem was disturbing enough to wake up slumberous Legislatures and common councils. Not enough roofs to shelter the population. Thanks to enterprise, philanthropic impulse, and easier money, that problem is being solved—as was certain to be. But the homing problem remains and sharpens. It is involved with a host of other problems vexing enough to keep any thoughtful lover of America troubled. Indeed, it may be said that the loss of the old-fashioned homestead is merely a sign of the forfeiture of those old-fashioned virtues which *made* the home. To call back the shell without recovering the kernel were a fatuous thing. I've not the remotest idea that, if each man should build

and occupy his own home, we should regain the lost *morale*. Doubtless the roof-trees of our sires covered many a bitterness, many a shame, many a heartache. We are their offspring—only run a trifle more wild and defiant. But, in those more primitive days the sin of the house veiled its face and walked ashamed before the community. To-day it dares to flaunt itself under high-sounding justifications. Ours is a bare-necked, bold, impudent age, fretful of every curb of raw impulse. All I am saying is that, with the loss of the actual home for vast multitudes of our citizenry, the struggle for a dreamful, unselfish life is harder.

"It's this hinting weather," sighed an unacclimated Southerner as he faced the open window of his office in a New York skyscraper. His eyes grew wistful and tender. And his heart cried across canyoned streets and teeming East River to an old plantation. He said he could almost hear the cattle lowing their contentful way back to the barnyard, and the doves cooing around their cote, and the banjoes strumming in the dear old Southern home. I do not think the heart yearns thus for a familiar apartment or a rented house in the block. And the man pulled himself roughly back to his task; "It's this hinting weather that's got me." Among the memoirs of

President Loubet, of France, is his account of an eager, flying visit to his old peasant home; how he burst in upon his unexpecting yet forever expectant mother; shut the door against cares and corrosions of state, snatched the batch of dough from aged hands and joyously kneaded it himself. "Mother, I've come home for two days," he told her.

One day Henry W. Grady disappeared from his familiar haunts. Half a week he was absent. And when he returned he told of the call of the homeland; told in his own tender fashion, with blazing eyes and voice a-quiver. They sat on the old veranda together, mother and he. "Talk to me, please," he said, "as you used when I was a little boy." And later: "Mother, won't you sing to me and pray over me as in the unforgotten days?" And later still, as the night wore on with tender exchange: "Mother, when I'm in bed, won't you come and tuck me in as you always did, you know?" And so, with heart warmed afresh and ideals remade, he slipped back to his post at the capital. Pity the man who, in memory at least, cannot make pilgrimage in that fashion. Never shall I forget the look in my friend's eyes when I visited him in his upstate, boyhood home, recently acquired by him. He had rehung the gate. He had sprinkled fresh gravel upon the

little path to the front door. He had restored the picture-Bible to its place on the marble-topped table in the center of the parlor with its hair-cloth furniture. He had repaired the old moss-covered bucket in the well. He had made his own again the dear scenes of his childhood. Nay, in sheer joy of it, he *was* a boy again. That is what home used to mean to the bravest and best. By so much as it means less to the bravest and best, to-day, are we sorely impoverished.

Not to speak of the loss to themselves, consider the loss to the world were there no homes of Burns and Scott, of Lincoln and Gladstone, of Schiller and Carlyle to visit. I cannot imagine such arch-dreamers as getting on without some sort of abiding habitation. Elbert Hubbard struck the trail of our instinctive quest when he took us on his sympathetic *Little Journeys to the Homes* of Great Painters, Orators, Musicians, Statesmen. The more ardent our hero-worship, the more avid we of a glimpse of the hearthstones of our heroes. No admirer of John Knox comes away from Edinburgh without seeing the intrepid prophet's home. His church, of course, and the streets he loved. And the little Holyrood chapel in which he rebuked the heart of his naughty queen. But, most of all, the John

Knox house; and the writing table which almost burned with the flame of his fiery pen; and the window from which he sometimes preached.

Or you pick up the romantic trail of Sir Walter Scott. And you read *Marmion* and *Ivanhoe* again. You localize *The Lady of the Lake.* You see Kenilworth Castle, and watch the moon rise over the crumbling arches of Melrose Abbey. And do you come away then? Not until you have walked through the home at Abbotsford, and sat in the room where Sir Walter fought out his battle with bankruptcy, and have breathed the lingering fragrance of his brave, fine spirit. Not Philadelphia, with its traditions of George Washington and his first Congress, nor Valley Forge and its heroic memories, nor yet Yorktown with its record of magnanimity, but Mount Vernon, the dearly loved home to which he retired with the honors of the ages, is the Mecca of most loving pilgrimage.

Always the *home* as the ultimate quest. As if we never knew the man until we saw him within the four walls he could call his own. As if we might never expect from a man anything that was not by implication in his home. As if only thus could we gain answer to Brutus' sneering question: "Upon what meat doth this

our Cæsar feed that he is grown so great?" Home, in its best and most permanent sense, provides the meat upon which greatness grows. Instinctively and by deep intuition we ask to hear the cradle song of Epworth Rectory, and to see the Little Corsican in boyhood, playing soldiers with his mates, and to taste the domestic airs of the one-time monk of Wittenburg.

Instinctively and by deep intuition, I say. Pity that the same instinct and intuition are not demanding, for our day, the sort of home we honor in the past. The nursery of American ideals, in former generations, was the American home with children in it, and a spirit of mutuality, and a prayer-altar often. What De Tocqueville said of the American church might, with even greater homage, be said of the American home. Back of the church, back of the school, back of democracy was the home. There freedom was nurtured, there obedience and respect for law, there self-denial and reverence. And the old-fashioned home had a sort of permanence, even physical. The family tree rooted and spread in a single door-yard. Generations came and went under the same roof, joying in the continuity, proud of it. Even the soil was sacred. Home was not many but one. The hard virtues blossomed

there. Under foul skies or fair, folks expected, and were expected, to "carry on."

Whereas to-day? I deem it no far cry from loss of permanence and continuity in the physical home to loss of the same qualities in life itself. Just which is cause and which is effect, I may not hazard a guess. Doubtless the restless, nomadic spirit of the day irks at "home" in the old-fashioned sense. "Change," if not "decay," is the demand of modernity. Anything, anywhere, so it be different. But certainly the increasing transiency of twentieth-century habitat lays no embargo upon current unrest—feeds it, rather. And I believe that the moral riots, the Philistinism, the hideous divorce-mill of our day, the feverish impatience of all restraint upon personal liberty are in no small degree chargeable to decadence of the old-fashioned home with its steadiness, its sanctions, its safeguards.

Be that as it may, mine is no counsel of reaction. I've no time to tilt at windmills—or stone walls; no diatribe against a really wonderful age. As J. P. Morgan observed concerning another phase of modern life, "You can't unscramble an egg." To turn back the hands on the clock is to jeopardize its works. An industrial age has its perils as truly as its plaudits. Multitudes must reside in the city

that others may "suburbanize." Few city dwellers can live in detached houses with manorial grounds and permanence. Flats must be, doubtless; and lodgings, and so on up and down the residential scale. The city, with its seethe, its congestion, its jostling, has come to stay. Splendid as well as squalid forces play into the problem. It remains, therefore, for the individual to put permanence into his *purpose* if he may not expect it in his *dwelling;* to play the old harmonies in the teeth of the noises of the street; to hold the supreme sanctions of life against all seductions and barter of ideal; to make his own soul, whatever else he may make or leave unmade.

But that old chimney of mine: I wish it could tell me its story. How old was the house built around it? Were there children to pop corn in the fireplace? And lovers who dreamed dreams and read their future in the lambent flames on the hearth? Was there a grand-dame in the chimney-corner, smoking her pipe perhaps, and living over, in the thrills of others, the halcyon days of her life? Was peace there? And unbroken trust? And prayer? And an open Book on the table yonder? Were there dead in the house? So many items in the story, and I unwitting of them all—save that, one day, fire swept the building. Day or night,

with slow alarm or sudden rush, perhaps with a baby in the crib or an invalid yonder, at meal-time or midnight—smoke, flame, crackle, tempest of fire, cry, wild haste to rescue treasure or life, despair—and a scarred chimney as sole sentry over what had once been a home.

Save for the mason's handiwork naught remained. Bricks, stone, mortar; no more. So far, honors rest with the bricklayer and stonemason. If durability of a certain kind be the truest memorial, I'd rather carry a hod than drive a plane or paint a picture, write a song or help a friend. Imperiously the heart cries out against being forgotten. "Will my countrymen remember me when I am gone?" inquired the dying Garfield. "I did so want to leave something by which men would remember me," lamented Greeley as his heart broke in defeat. "I have tried so hard to do right," protested Cleveland at the end of the road. All the immortality that some men dare ask is an adequate and lasting remembrancer. And even the stoutest believers in life eternal like to leave somewhat to keep their earthly names alive. The savage left his battle-ax or spear. The Egyptian left his mummy. The king leaves his heir. The missionary leaves his converts. Jesus left a cup and bread—with this throb-

bingly tender request: "Do this *in remembrance* of me."

Here, I believe, is the vast bitterness of Shelley's disappointment and chagrin with life. Spite of glaring defects, his was a rare spirit. Alternately he blazed and sang like an angel. Coleridge called him "an archangel—slightly damaged." But he came to the close of his feverish life with a crushing sense of futility. The world seemed no nearer its millennium of democracy. He felt defeated at every turn: defeated in purpose, defeated in love, defeated in poesy—by the critics. His *Prometheus* might have been his autobiography. Nothing to leave as memorial; nothing that his contemporaries deemed worth while. In similar disillusion, Keats gave orders for his mortuary confession: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." Poor frustrate spirit! Did he never study a rainbow? According to the vivid imagery of the Bible, God writes upon a dissolving mist the sign of his everlasting covenant. Not upon solid rocks but across the back of a retreating storm the rainbow arches. If bronze and monolith were the most valid memorials, then were God better known by a pebble than by a pansy. But who would not rather be the author of the ode "To a Nightingale" than be credited with building the Sphinx? Durability

and permanence are not synonyms—in life. In Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or Kipling's "Recessional," in Washington's Farewell Address, or Jesus' last word on the cross, is more immortality than shall be found in all the stiff, cold monuments of earth.

Now that I stop to consider, that old chimney of mine is a pathetic object on its own account. Standing there, mute and solitary, it is an admission of futility. So long as it remains where I saw it, it is not quite worth old brick. Save as a reminder of bygone usefulness, it is as inept as an isolated telegraph pole in Sahara or a mowing machine in Iceland. Built to carry off flame and smoke, it could not even save from smoke and flame the house of which it was a part. In a way it were better demolished. Such a depressing memorial of failure!—like the testamentary fortunes of some men. "How much did he leave?" I asked concerning a mutual friend. "All he had," came the stinging reply, more stinging than the speaker intended. "*All he had.*" All that remained of his life-structure was money. No great dream to be realized. No lustrous name to cherish. No investment in his less fortunate brothers. No passionate attachment to friend. Not even an art collection. Just money. Rightly viewed, money is a sort of chimney.

It helps provide for the warmth and comfort of the house of life. But to live for sake of the chimney; and when the final test comes, to leave nothing but the chimney whose use has departed! By contrast, John Wesley left a seal ring and a few pounds and some books—and a church to bear his name; and England, as Lecky says, saved to her best traditions; and wave movements that have not yet reached their uttermost shore.

Always there are two kinds of people. People who live for the *chimney*—wealth, selfish fame, education for its own sake, indulgence. And people who live for the house; or, rather, *in* the house *for* the world. I'd rather *not* have a chimney for my memorial.

II

WORRY AS AN ASSET

JUST as I was waiting for the self-starter to work on this theme, a friend quoted the familiar adage concerning "the pot that never boils." That seemed to start the engine. What sort of trip we shall make is for the reader to decide—afterward. Anyhow, we're off. Everybody knows the alleged disadvantage of the "watched pot." And everybody knows also that such a vessel reaches boiling point precisely as soon as if our eyes were withdrawn. The difference is purely subjective, with certain distinct advantages in favor of the "watched pot." The unwatched pot may boil over, or burn a bottom off or spoil the contents. To borrow a somewhat discredited phrase, "watchful waiting" is usually far safer and more productive than an affected and easy unconcern. I am in favor of a sedulous, solicitous eye; especially when the pot is my property, or the contents are of interest to me, or the world has a stake in the issue.

For the old, time-honored proverb has outgrown its original scope. Once it was a half ironic caution. To-day it has become a phil-

osophy, a popular cult, a religion. Mental hygienists prescribe it in huge doses. Moralists, poetasters, Christian Scientists, propagandists of New Thought under its various names, all have adopted the spirit of it. Out on worry of any sort! The virtue in most request, nowadays, is a sort of supreme *nonchalance.* We are supposed to smile even when nothing is above the horizon to smile at. If a tooth aches, or a heart goes heavy with loss, or a black foreboding rolls up like a threatening tornado, "forget it." This is precisely what a friend said to me, recently, when I opened the door upon an agony of personal failure through which I had been passing. I had lost out in an eager venture on behalf of a prodigal. I had wrung my heart into the cup and seen the contents spilled. Normally, as it seemed to me, I was questioning if I had left aught undone, and what I still might do for the other's redemption. And the only comment was, "Oh, forget it." As if one *could* or *ought.* As if the paramount achievement were to fly so far above ordinary frets and inequities and dilemmas as not to be able to see them with naked, sympathetic eye. Instinctively, if unwittingly, I had asked for bread and had gotten a stone. Any ordinary mortal, unjaundiced by this modern dogma of unconcern, can guess how

much comforted I felt. Just a cold stone instead of a crumb of sympathetic understanding. I'd trade all the stuff in that frigidly philosophic quarry for a heart-morsel. Fortunately for the world at large, the counselors of indifference are usually poor exponents of their own dictum. Yes, I had seen that same friend walk the floor in a panic of grief over the death of his patient. And I loved him for the glimpse of his sackcloth. And I smiled to myself because the man was so much more human than his philosophy.

Over a certain table, at the Inn in East Aurora, while the brilliant Philistian spirit of that enterprise was still alive, there hung an attractive legend burned into wood. "It doesn't matter." Of a seething swarm of trifles that vex or depress us is the motto most true. Always are we in danger of superheating ourselves over inconsequential matters. We burn out the bearings responding to false alarms, and then cannot meet the call of a great disaster. We cry so hard over spilt milk that we blind ourselves to opportunities for replenishing the pail. The days are rife with discomforts that pass while we are still chafing over them. Of how many an interruption or disappointment must we admit, an hour later, that "it doesn't matter"!

And yet—and yet: I am more or less

familiar with the standard arguments for an unworried mind. It conduces to longer and sounder sleep. Granted. It helps postpone wrinkles. Admitted. It means longer life. Probably, though not proved. It makes for pleasanter comradeship. Usually. It implies being "in tune with The Infinite." That depends. It depends upon the sort of God one worships. There is a Laodicean deity who "dooms to a passionless limbo that knows not life nor change." If unruffled calm is the noblest human mood, and an unseamed, placid face constitutes real beauty, and longevity attained at any sacrifice, by hook or crook, is the great gain of life, then adopt the "Pollyanna" thesis, join a "Why Worry? Club" and cultivate equanimity at the cost of your soul. Keep your eye off the pot: Let it boil or not—what matter? Hold an even pulse and a low blood pressure. Say with Chesterfield that "It all comes out even at the end of the day, and it comes still more even when all days are over." Whatever else you do, or do not, don't worry. If, on the other hand, the great business of life is not merely to "get by" but to leave earth bettered by our passing over it; if the only sure way to join the "Choir Invisible whose music is the gladness of the world" is "not by wine drunk but by the wine poured

forth," then worry, in its higher aspects, may serve the noblest ends of life.

As Agnes Repplier has recently reminded us in a few yeasting paragraphs that fairly raised my hair. Thank God for the affront to what Miss Repplier calls a "soulless serenity." For years I have been inwardly protesting, with an occasional outward flare, against the spirit she brands with a red hot pen. Peace without victory, peace without honor, peace at any price, peace where there is no peace—my soul loathes the wretched pother of cheap anodyne and senile philosophy. I wish I might have written the article referred to. Matters have come to such a pass that one scarcely dares to confess a sleepless night or a heartache or a pang of genuine solicitude on behalf of the age, lest somebody cry him down. "Why worry?" Well, why not? As an unnamed contributor to *The Outlook* says, in a sentence which evidently set Miss Repplier's pen afire: "The artist who does not worry had better instantly spur himself to worry over that fact, for worry is a fundamental intellectual asset."

Not all worry, of course, so miscalled. Real worry is very different from fretting. To chafe over the postman's tardiness, or to seethe with solicitude concerning a broken dish or a fancied illness, or to fall into spasms of appre-

hension because it may rain on the morrow, is not worry in the dictionary sense. I've been victimized a-plenty by that sort of spirit. Likely I've exemplified it shamefully often. One chronic "worrier" can spoil a picnic or the peace of the evening hour. Asked of her health, one of your "worritin" mortals replied, dismally: "Well, I feel purty good to-day. But when I feel good, it always make me feel bad, 'cause I know I'm going to feel worse to-morrow." Membership in a "Why Worry? Club" or perusal of Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*, would be a godsend to such spuming souls. Worry, at its best, is a spermatic thing, bearing the promise of harvests of betterment. Every moral brightening is born out of somebody's gloom. Repentance is a troublous state, but without it you shall have no redemption. Thank God for the grace and ability to worry. And compliments to Miss Repplier for her stirring paragraphs.

During recent years we have had defenses of almost everything under the sun, including the historically damned. We have had "A Defense of Philosophic Doubt" (excellent): *apologias* for both Capitalism and Bolshevism (not entirely ingenuous); voices lifted to clear the names of Nero, Henry VIII, Lucretia Borgia, Oscar Wilde, even William Hohenzollern (most

specious); pallid excuses for defiance of all the Commandments. But nobody to come plump out with a stout defense of worry; nobody, except the author above-mentioned, to vindicate the sacred right and solemn duty of going anxious upon adequate occasion. Everybody, almost, chortling over the celestial advantage of an unplagued and imperturbable composure —till I'm weary of it all. If I had to choose between an unruffled calm and a spirit so solicitous for good that it even *borrows* trouble, as Mrs. Perkins remarked upon seeing the Apollo Belvedere for the first time, "Well, if that is Apollo Belvedere, give me Perkins."

Set this truth in a business frame. You shall hear modern merchants vaunt that they "never worry." One need not always believe them. I'm not quite sure what Collis P. Huntington meant when he declared, "I don't work hard, I work easy." It is quite possible to veneer anxiety with a placid exterior—much as the modern woman applies cosmetics to hide wrinkles. A man need not carry home his commercial perplexities and spread them all over the dinner table, or choke the domestic atmosphere with them, in order to attest his solicitude about his business. But make certain of this: that the men who open continents of trade and build the nerves of the banking

world, carry their load of worry, however deeply hidden from the casual eye. In every office, every counting-room, every industrial plant, *somebody* must do the worrying. If not the head of the concern, then the junior partner, or a manager, or a foreman. As hopefully try to make bread without yeast as to raise a business mass in absence of the ferment of somebody's anxiety. Energy is inadequate to the task; energy is a muscle lacking motor-nerves. Prescience, sagacity, grasp, will not suffice. Brilliancy may be the sheen on an empty vessel. Behind all other qualities, fusing all, thrilling them, fertilizing them, is the burden of solicitude which chafes somebody's soul.

I might instance two merchant princes, partners, the name of whose enterprise is a household word. Comrades, intimates, it would be difficult to select more contrasting personalities. One is placid, composed, unhurried, unmarked with care. The other shows in his face his load. His the worrying for the firm. He carries, at his finger tips, a thousand details of the business. Far into the night he goes with his problems—until sleep becomes a stranger. It needs no physician to say which will live the longer. Nor a commercial diagnostician to say which is the soul of the enterprise. These things are as plain as a pikestaff to any

except the blind. "No bank is a success until the president takes it to bed with him." When a man assures me that he is able to shut the door upon his business, at five P. M., I know as well as I know anything else in the world that unless someone—cashier, credit-man, or sales manager—carries the responsibility into the wee sma' hours, some dismal morning the door will not open as usual. "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." And eggs frequently come high. In any large sense success seldom flies in at the window. It is grubbed for, in black earth, with bleeding fingers. Anybody may hold together a fortune, once acquired, by sitting tight on a strong-box of gilt-edged securities, or collecting rents on real estate on Main Street. But the *seeds* of such a fortune were probably sown in sweat and silently watered with tears. Worry of the right kind—not testiness, not fidgeting, not unreason, but the spirit that rests not until it is sure it has offered its maximum—is the most spermatic thing in the world.

Take further instance, in the field of art, whether of pen or brush, chisel or tone. Why should a genius like Dante confess that his *Inferno* had "made him lean for many years"? Or Carlyle find himself forspent after a morning's work? Not all so-called literature comes hard

and costly like that. Some writers can dash off pages as a bird flies. No strain, nor denial, nor birth-throes. And seldom immortality of fame. I wish I had a penny apiece for the carefully indited sheets that have gone into my waste-basket—more in the basket, often, than left on the desk. The which might argue stupidity of course. At least I have a sense of high company. Mascagni's *Intermezzo*, the melody that won place for a whole opera, was a discarded and rescued fragment. That artist who advised a pupil to "mix his paint with brains" might have added an equally indispensable ingredient—*worry*. Brains are not enough. Or, to say the rest of it, brains must be fired with passionate solicitude. Cellini used to work himself into mental fever while his bronzes were casting. Wagner was a difficult citizen in his creative moods. Of Thomas Carlyle, his devoted and long-suffering wife wrote once, "We are now in the valley of the shadow of Frederick the Great."

At his dinner table, recently, a young architect drew aside the veil of reserve which so often conceals the travail of real genius: "I didn't worry enough over those sketches. I just rushed them through, and sent them out. And they came back unaccepted. Then I got busy and anxious. And the contract is mine."

He had omitted that which never can be left out of a piece of real art. He had dispensed with fever. And never shall you have a paramount product except at cost of a rise of soul-temperature.

Even the artist's output, whether with chisel, pigment, or language, must not harass folks nowadays. One recalls the outcry, predominatingly feminine, against a certain symbolic sculpture recently unveiled in New York City. Music must be jazzed or syncopated so as to avoid stirring a serious pulse. Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth are played to small audiences; whereas slush, slime, and saponified sentiment pack the house. Imagine such plays as *Antigone* or *Oedipus* being written to-day. Sophocles, Marlowe, Molière wrote for contemporaries who were willing to *think*. But the last thing the modern theater-goer pays for is sustained thought or feeling. Every tension must be relieved by a jest. Vaudeville, playlets-thin-as-water, buffoonery, saccharine or meretricious films fill the boards. Any sort of a back-door-escape from the gripping problems of life or the atmosphere of portent. Aristophanes' "*Frogs*" paraphrased and brought down to date, would not be called comedy to-day. It would not be grotesque and side-splitting enough. People do not want to think, lest

their confounded calm be ruffled. What use of joining a "Society for the Elimination of Anxiety" and then patronizing a show or reading a book that unsettles composure? Why worry or let anybody set you sorrying?

Thanks to this sort of logic, we nearly stayed out of the Great War. We were more afraid of hysteria than of cowardice. Notable voices kept adjuring America to keep cool, to preserve neutrality of thought even. Not until the fire scorched our fences did we feel justified in becoming excited. One shudders, if he still permits himself such indulgence, to think that we *might* have had no part or glory in the conflict. Thank God for a belated partnership which helps to becloud a previous apathy! Remembering our whilom indifference, the stanzas of Marion C. Smith are not too biting:

"We are the Laodiceans! when God's great summons came,
Cleaving the hosts of living men as with a line of flame;
We were tossed aside like vagrant leaves at an idle wind's behest,
For we knew not the ways of battle, and we found not the ways of rest.

* * * * *

We are the Laodiceans; our fight is only with those
Who would send us to burning deserts or whelm us in alien snows;
We feel no lure of march nor flight; we taste not hope nor shame;
And we die, in our visionless Eden, of a curse without a name."

Over the blood-spotted snows of the winter at Valley Forge arched a bow of promise. It was sprung by the shining on the clouds of the radiance of a great patriot's soul, never more luminous than during those terrible months. Who could say what the issue would be when the ice in the streams broke again? According to the easy philosophy of to-day, Washington ought to have choked back his anguish and gone home to pleasant dreams. Whatever *was* to be *would* be, doubtless. So why worry? If England won in the spring, probably 'twere fore-ordained—and better so. If the cause of the colonies was just, presumably it must conquer. Anyhow, in God, rather than in any gnawing human solicitude, "be our trust." But those were stern days. Men expected to keep vigil over the fate of their dreams. And the most opulent nation of the modern world is the sinewy child of that early travail. Unless Francis Scott Key had lain awake, on a certain night, a prisoner off Fort McHenry, watching to see if the flag were still there, we should sing no "Star-Spangled Banner." And unless others, of like mind, had shared the spirit of his vigil, there would be no starred and barred emblem to wave, and no "Colossus of the West" to wave over. Quiet, self-contained contemporaries who worried over naught else so

much as over the possession of their souls in peace, called Theodore Roosevelt an alarmist. Why should he break in upon our complacency with noise of rattling saber? The conflict he predicted never would befall. Commercial interests would not permit. Such an Armageddon was unthinkable; therefore why disturb equanimity by giving an anxious thought? Any such international combat would fall apart by its own weight. Grievously has the past decade answered such comfortable doctrine. Had our prophets of an easy mind been willing to do some manly worrying about the war-cloud in the East, and had there been a more strenuous man at the helm when the cloud was about to break, millions of lives and financial chaos might have been saved. Admit that it is not work but worry that kills; then go on to say that work interfused with worry makes alive—if not the subject of it, then the world at large.

All personal redemptions are wrought through the same vigorous process. I do not think there is any bloodless, dispassionate method of helping men. We have heard enough —and more—about the hysteria which compassed the Eighteenth Amendment. Say that it *was* hysteria: for my part I prefer it to the *dolce far niente* of those who always believe in

letting events shape their own course. And I should be grateful for instance of any notable human betterment achieved without nervous excitation. Where no rocks lift opposing shoulders any stream may run smooth. Why blame the stream instead of the rocks for the spume and roar? How get to the sea unless the stream rushes on, in rage if must be? Such a torrent is a worrisome thing; leaping, chafing, headstrong, flinging its spray toward the sky. So is the spirit that moves toward any human redemption, individual or community. It may be boisterous in face of opposition. It always seethes with pent emotion. But it forever tends to aerate and cleanse itself as it sweeps on toward its goal. All the world's pioneers in human service have been fiery men. Moses had a sinfully hot temper which cost him dear. The flames which crackled around Savonarola were not fiercer than the fires in his own soul. Luther and Wesley, Cobden and Bright, Garrison and Beecher and Lincoln could blaze—did blaze—immoderately. John of Patmos was a tamed "son of thunder." Nay, the Protagonist of all redemption, was both the gentlest and most vehement son of woman. He knew the anguish of lying awake over the iniquities he came to abate. "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," he confessed on

the eve of his Passion. He is the Prince of Solicitousness—on behalf of others.

If then, without loss of composure and shedding of blood, there is no remission otherwhere, why expect it within oneself? Walt Whitman thought there might be advantage in being a dog: "He doesn't lie awake nights to whine and sweat over his sins." Quite true; but for a reason which the thrustful poet of great latitudes did not mention. So far as we know, a dog has no sins to sweat over. You may call him a bad dog, but you do not therefore endow him with moral accountability. Give him a bone and a bed, and he probably will not worry—unless his master is lost. In which event many a life has been saved by a dog's capacity for restlessness well-nigh human. If a dog had sins, he would do well to lie awake over them. But his master is different—and more. He can do wrong, knowing it to be such. In religious phrasing, he is a "sinner." Gloss him, persiflage him, transfigure him as we may, he carries with him always the seeds of possible self-destruction. And when he sows them, furtively or broadcast, is that not adequate occasion for worry? A justifiable amount of personal concern, even panic, over his transgression is his best hope of amendment, his most potent asset. To no Herod or Nero,

Macbeth or Tito, Dimmesdale or Becky Sharp would I dare say: "Forget it. Why worry?" Rather to each major and minor delinquent, down the long line of folly and falseness, in Miss Repplier's phrase—"Keep on worrying." Such grim exercise, properly based and directed, is the hope of the world.

III

ON OMITTING

"If I knew how to omit," confessed the Sage of Samoa, "I would ask no other knowledge. The man who knew how to omit could make an Iliad of the daily newspaper." *Now* I make thrice certain that Stevenson had a daring soul. "An Iliad of the daily newspaper?" Had he said, "A whistle out of a pig's tail," I could hardly be more impressed with his audacity. Moreover, he had never seen a copy of a strictly modern journal with its tonnage of ads., its flaming scareheads, and its guffaws of pictorial humor. I'm some dreamer myself, if I may be allowed to say so. But, frankly, I would not know where to begin, as *editor*, if the publishers were to give me leave to practice Stevenson's maxim upon their product. As a *reader* of daily prints I get on fairly well—by omitting most of the contents and taking the residue on suspicion.

Day was when I should have missed my morning coffee less than the newspaper laid beside it. Now I manage to pass the breakfast ordeal without either. Even before the advent of the famous coffee-substitute for which there

is said to be a reason, I eschewed the fragrant cup. And, since then, I have discovered that I begin my day's work rather comfortably, though no "Morning Blast" sounds in my ears its strident medley of hysteria and crime yclept "news." What shall it profit a man to surfeit his brain with circumstantial accounts of bestiality? Or to follow the lead of the repertorial mind which seems to function most actively when least embarrassed by facts? Or to churn oneself into misery over woes that never may arrive, and international complications that are not even good guesswork? I think we might be advantaged by a statute prohibiting the printing of "news" until it is at least twenty-four hours stale. I am bothered exceedingly (when I permit it) by the need of revising so many matutinal judgments as soon as the evening editions are off the press. I'd rather be a day or two behind the *times* than so far ahead of the *facts*—in the matter of newspaper information—purely a personal preference, of course. And, inasmuch as few of my contemporaries are likely to agree with me, no harm done to the temple of our liberties concerning which the prints wax so eloquent—meaning themselves mostly.

So much from the helpless reader's angle. Probably Stevenson and I (as representatives

of that vast public which must take what the gods provide in the newspapers if we want any news at all) might differ as to "how to omit" in the interest of a sane journalism. Woe is me if I were charged with the task: "An Iliad out of the daily newspapers"! I'd rather help finance a scenic railway to the moon, or try to persuade some of my friends that the right to get drunk is somewhat less than inalienable and sacred.

But it just occurs to me that the foregoing paragraphs are not quite fair to the author of *Treasure Island*. So far as I know, he entertained no editorial ambitions. He merely used the newspaper as a horrible instance—perhaps the most horrific he could adduce—of the need of an art of omitting. He was thinking in terms of life. "If I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge."

"Aren't you ashamed to sing so well?" asked the great Philip of his son. And of a later Philip it was said that his failures lay at the door of his inability to discriminate between things of great and things of small import. Both seemed to command equally his interest. Bayard Taylor used to complain of the absurd and embarrassing tenacity with which his memory clung to trifles. Too late Cardinal Wolsey realized his mistaken emphasis: "Had

I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, he would not in my age have left me naked to mine enemies." Victor Hugo is credited with saying that he had not uttered the thousandth part of what was in him. Perhaps it were better so. Many an author has thinned his product by over-production. That novel which leaves nothing to the imagination is confessedly a disappointment. *Re*pression is essential to the highest *ex*pression. All vascular literature, like all other great art and all heroic service, is, in no small part, the result of a pitiless use of the pruning knife. Who shall guess the omissions practiced in the composition of Gray's "Elegy," or Rembrandt's "Night Watch," or Greig's *Pere Gynt?* Imagine a Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar" five times as long, or a *Gettysburg Address* needing an hour for delivery; or a cross that spilled no blood. If we knew how to omit—wisely, bravely, unselfishly—the rest would be comparatively easy. All the way from the clod up to God runs this sharp urgency.

I found it in my first garden; a small stone-bespattered, shallow bit of soil in Connecticut. As gardens go, mine was naught to boast of. But sometimes I think the prime value of such a patch is not the potatoes and berries that grow there, but the lessons that cry up to you.

To the harvesting eye a garden is school. My tubers taught me—that the real crop ripens in hiding often. My melons taught me—what astonishing moisture may be drawn from an arid soil. My beans taught me—the superfluity of self-advertising. And my lettuce plants? Smile, ye agricultural sapients, smile! It was my first garden—and my last. I worked it without the grace of a book on method. And I learned from my lettuce plants the vivid truth just quoted from Stevenson. They were the saddest, palest looking truck you ever saw. Not the faint pledge of a well-proportioned head for salad. My neighbor came—and laughed, as he had good warrant.

"Say, if you don't know any more about making sermons than you do about farming, you'd better quit. Thin them out, man, thin them out"—(not my pulpit products, mind you, they were thin enough already). "Tear up three quarters of the spindling heads, or plant them somewhere else." I did so, though with artless reluctance—and enjoyed delectable lettuce a few weeks later.

Thus I learned a truth which applies everywhere. Whoso would gather generous harvest must appear ruthless often with the children of his hand or brain. Maximum growth, maximum talent, maximum efficiency in any

realm is gained only by knowing how to omit. Good seed, sown too thick or sparingly thinned, prove as fatal as weeds. God's hand is as exacting as it is prodigal. God knows how to omit—which is merely a poet's paraphrase of the scientific law of "selection." Every perfected plant, every highly organized animal, even man at his best, has a long history of discarded forms and outworn patterns. As someone puts it: "In order that a certain species of moths may attain a particular contour and marking of wings, untold generations of moths are doomed to perish prematurely." Even the graphic rocks which the Welsh miner-poet calls "The infinite biography of God" tell but a fragmentary if thrilling story of omissions and relegations, in the world's forward march. Toward shining ideals the Great Artificer works his increasing purpose. Nor does he shrink—if we may judge his method—from sacrificing the good to the better, the better to the best. No price of temporary defeat or apparent frustration is too large to pay for a worthy consummation. Without savage disregard of his creatures, yet without cowardice, God knows how to omit; and the wizardry of Burbank is simply a patient, skillful approximation to the divine craftsmanship.

One can scarcely turn around without encountering the force of Stevenson's aphorism. In the physical realm, for example. "Thy body at its best?" queried Browning. But the body is never at its best except by learning how to omit. In my undergraduate days every serious contestant for athletic honors went "into training," as we said. For a period of weeks or months he put his body under hard discipline. He ate at a "training table." Dainties were proscribed, also narcotics and alcohol. He must be in bed at a certain hour, and up again by the clock. Many of the usual divertisements of college days were taboo. And I recall that to break training, during the period of it, constituted an almost unpardonable sin. The honor of our Alma Mater, its glory on the field, was threatened every time a team-member violated the rules of preparation. What a clean-limbed, long-winded, sinewy line of fellows filed out of their quarters to meet the foe on diamond or gridiron, track or river! How deeply the lesson sank into their souls, for life-use, I cannot say. But, for a season, and for sake of the thrill of victory, they had learned how to omit.

Asked why he never used liquor, Edison replied, "Because I thought I had better use for my head." The "Grand Old Man" of England, at

four-score, said he owed his remarkable health to the utter respect which he had always showed his body as the temple of God. Chauncey M. Depew, hale, alert, resourceful long past the allotted term of life, radiant of good cheer and still ready with a fetching story, attributes to his abstemious habits his longevity. When Theodore Roosevelt was about eleven years old, as Mrs. Robinson tells the story in her delightful biography, their father said to the lad: "Theodore, you have the mind but not the body—you must *make your body*." The little boy looked up, throwing back his head in a characteristic fashion, then with a flash of those white teeth which became so well known that, when he was police commissioner, the story ran that any recreant policeman would faint if he suddenly came face to face with a set of false teeth in a shop window, he said, "I'll make my body." So, by hard discipline, the delicate child became, in manhood, both apostle and exponent of the strenuous life. That early decision, vigorously adhered to, doubtless saved his life, when a bullet pierced his lung; and again when African fever scorched him. What pungent emphasis the Great War laid upon the art of omitting, as applied to the physical man!

Since when became any frank claim of the

body a justification for self-indulgence? Years ago, I found that, in the interest of physical integrity, I must cut out veal from my dietary. It might have been fresh pork, or strawberries, or tomatoes, or tea, or tobacco, or any other pleasant thing. One man's meat poisons his neighbor. The list of proscriptions may not be the same for any two mortals—though I think it varies not with respect to certain transgressions. But every sane human who aspires to three score and ten, with a self-respecting old age, must learn how to omit.

And for that matter, many a so-called claim *of* the body is a drain *put upon* the body by a distempered brain. I have no patience at all with ancient Manichæism in whatever form. These bodies of ours are not deserving of the contumely we heap upon them. They would get on exceedingly well if we would let them. 'Tis the sins of the *mind* inflamed by current literature and talk, perverted by drama and picture and dress, enervated by a subtly poisonous atmosphere of self-indulgence—'tis the sins of the *mind* which we project upon the body, and for which the body pays terribly.

So in the realm of mind. If we know how to omit, we should be so much better furnished than we are. The heroine of a story now passed into eclipse says that, when she was

young, she thought she ought to know *everything* about *everything*. Later she would have been satisfied to know *something* about everything. Now she admits she would be grateful to know *something* about *something*. An omnibus mind is a futile mind. There are no cyclopedists in knowledge. Each must delimit himself if he would be truly wise; must focus his thought instead of trying to sweep the universe with it. "People know too much," as Gerald Stanley Lee suggests in one of his caustic essays. That is, we attempt to spread ourselves over a too extended literary area. Had Bacon lived in the twentieth century, he might not have affirmed that "reading maketh a *full* man." Sometimes it maketh a pathetically *empty* man. One of the most addle-headed women I ever knew told me with gusto that she was reading eleven classics at once, hopping from one to another, I suppose, like a cricket on the hearth.

"Have you read——" begins the modern inquisitor. And forthwith our cheeks begin to crimson over our dilemma between the shame of lying and the chagrin of confessing ignorance. Next time we shall be more careful. We are afraid *not* to know. Whereas, the truly cultured man can, with such grace and sweetness, tell me that he *does not* know, I feel half ashamed of knowing it myself. What if you are not

familiar with Galsworthy's latest? Or cannot acquire a taste for Kipling? Or fail to keep awake over Howells? Or do not subscribe for *The Atlantic Monthly?* Or prefer Deland to DeMorgan? Who said that we must all go through the same literary hopper? Nature perpetrates no duplicate in field or stream. Why should we essay to improve upon her ways when we enter the mental realm? Courage, then, to exemplify the law of natural selection in our reading and thinking life, having supreme regard to maximum manhood and womanhood. Courage to omit—particularly the coarse and unwholesome—in the interest of highest culture. "Art for *art's* sake" is a misnomer, an abject apology for impudicity. Art is for *man's* sake, or it is without standing and justification in a decent world.

But our doctrine of omitting holds good of life in its social aspect and reach. When not to speak, what not to say—who does not need an extra semester's instruction in the art of such self-restraint? Oh, the stabbing things we should be glad not to have uttered! Worse than the reproach of having kept silence inopportunely is the remorse of having spoken out of season. Once I heard a man lament because he had failed to deliver his blasting

opinion when occasion offered. He had missed his chance to be heard cruelly. But I doubt if heaven will penalize us for such omissions. Blowing off steam may be a relief to the boiler; but it usually is a nuisance to the neighborhood. And 'tis a crime when it scalds the bystander.

"Boys flying kites, haul in their white-winged birds;
You can't do that when you are flying words.
The angry word, unspoken, falls back dead;
But God himself can't kill it when 'tis said."

Did we know how to omit the cutting speech, we might oftener attain to that aristocracy of wisdom concerning which one initiate confessed: "God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

Even under a barrage fire of accusation an innocent man can afford to omit most volleys of hot self-defense. Vehemence of protest is no proof of conscious integrity. The guilty conscience that needs no accuser needs still less an attorney for the defense. It can plead its own case with elaborate ingenuity and fireworks of indignation. The transgressor seldom waits for anyone to open court against him: he usually confesses judgment by opening for himself. Many a murderer has employed his last breath to deny the crime he was expiating.

The greater the offense alleged, the more splendid the value of silence as an answer. As Dryden puts it:

> "The silence often of pure innocence
> Persuades when speaking fails."

Court annals have no other records to match that of a Man on trial in old Jerusalem. Reputation, honor, life itself, together with the trust of his friends, were at stake. Nor had He the grace of legal justice. If ever a falsely accused prisoner had warrant for protest, it was "that Man." Even the presiding judge, ashamed of the travesty upon law, invited the Man to speak in his own behalf. "Hearest thou not the things which they witness against thee? Yet he answered never a word." Majestic, incomparable silence! He left his case to God and the ages. And royally have God and the ages answered for him.

Or shall I speak of duties, particularly the sort which Doctor Holland calls "suspected duties"? I mean obligations which never were laid upon us by God, but put up to us by overzealous partisans or by an oversensitive conscience. The world is rife with Macedonian cries. Great human needs plead up into our faces. A community-ful of shadow and misery challenges all the chivalry and sympathy of

us. But, as a confused servant of men said to me sadly: "There are so many things I want to do to help folks, and I cannot do them all." Of course not. We ought not to try. We must reserve to ourselves the ultimate right of choice. Cultivate here also the grace of natural selection. In short, learn how to omit.

Let Jenny Lind "sing to God," as once she described her vocation. She should not be asked to imitate Florence Nightingale or Catherine Fry or Joan of Arc. To insist that Turner dig his own potatoes, or that Edison shall become a foreign missionary, is to defraud the world. Even socialism allows for this fact in the redistribution that is to be. Never can we be "all things to all men," even with the apostolic motive of "saving some." To be obedient to the greatest Voice that summons us; to keep faith with self while attempting to bless others; to go the full length of one's cable-tow gladly, courageously, and unashamed, is all that the ages can ask.

And our rights—how about a little wisdom in the matter of omissions concerning them? We are hearing a plenty about "rights." Rights of the child, women's rights, rights of labor—inalienable rights, so called. How heated folks grow in assertion and defense of their rights. As if the *summum bonum* were to carefully

differentiate (nor always carefully) our rights from those of other people; to sit down upon them and hold them against all contestants. In one of Deland's stories of old Chester occurs a truly great passage in which Helena pleads for her right of happiness. That was all she asked. She would not interfere with anybody else. She merely claimed the privilege of leaving the conventional path, and of warming her lonely heart at the embers of a wayside altar. Rights! Yes. But, as Helena admitted later, the privilege of claiming one's rights may not be nearly so satisfying as the privilege of laying down one's rights for an adequate motive.

I suppose, for example, that every man has a right to eight hours sleep out of twenty-four. But there rises before me, in grateful memory, the face of a man who, for consecutive weeks, omitted to assert that hygienic right. Night after night, through a tedious winter, he sat, sleepless for the greater part, by the bed of his boy. Weary with the burdens of a stressful life, he stiffened his broad shoulders and carried double burden, that he might spare the strength of the mother. To this day I know not how he bore the strain. To this day I remember him best, not for the rights he claimed but for the rights he surrendered. For

he was my father, and I was the boy. What son reveres his mother for the rights she maintained against interruption of her selfish pleasure? against the inroads of her children upon her strength? The divinest privilege ever asked by the queenliest women is the opportunity to give themselves away—for love's sake. Diana Mallory, demanding naught easier than to pour out her strength at the bedside of the unworthy man she loved, types those gracious, luminous souls, whose incandescence glorifies a dull world.

David Livingstone had a right to remain in England with his motherless children instead of dying in Africa. Rupert Brooke had a right to save his genius to literature by keeping out of the trenches. Belgium had a right to her acres inviolate. But until the last war debt bond is paid, and heroism loses caste, the spirit of that little country will be remembered. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray the Father, and he shall presently give me twelve legions of angels?" asked earth's best Man in his Gethsemane. Many and weighty were the reasons for claiming the angels. And so he must have forfeited the splendor of his name, with the homage of oncoming ages.

What to omit? Not "*what* but *how*." Between the two is a gulf of meaning. "What" is

unprotestant, Pharisaic, dwarfing. Each must make for himself his *index Expurgatorius.* Stevenson's phrase is not a code but a principle. It is broad like prairies and deep as the sea. It crowns each man king, consecrates him priest at the altar of his own life. So omit as to leave first things first—in the spirit of Erasmus: "When I get any money I buy books. If any is left, I buy clothes." So omit as to insure time and space for what the French call "the making of the soul." So omit as to give number two and number three their chance; as Lincoln said, "I am not in favor of crushing anybody out."

IV

THROUGH A PORTHOLE

From childhood days a ship's ports have held me strangely. I mean the eyes set in series along the hull. Big, small, elaborate, simple, dirty even—for, in such case, I found myself asking how much more might be seen after cleaning—all have interested me. I wonder why. Perhaps if the question could be answered for me, I might hope also to understand my aversion to hot weather, and my preference for lyrical music, and my predilection for language over mathematics. Nothing else is so irrational, even indefensible, as taste. Not the acquired sort, to be explained by early associations and the like, but the kind that comes down to us with the color of our eyes and the size of our feet, and thrusts itself forward instinctively before we know the difference between good and evil. Why, of two full brothers, one should take to medicine as a duck to water, while the other chooses art or banking; why liquor or tobacco, golf or aquatics appeal to Jones and not to Smith, who shall say?

Unless he names his ancestors. The line

seems to run backward and stop, God knows where. That's the trouble; we do not know where to precisely fix praise or blame. We seldom are able to travel back far enough to apportion responsibility. I suppose it is there —just as I take for granted that the moon has another face, and that the Pacific Ocean washes other continents unseen by me. Unless there is more in heredity than most modernists are ready to grant, I do not see why certain ivies should twine in a direction opposite to other ivies. Nor why freshly hatched chicks should be as much afraid of water as ducklings are prone to it. Nor the dog's love of human companionship. Science is a strange, stubborn mistress. Sometimes she fairly spills over with information unsought and valueless for me; and again leaves me, with parched tongue, thirsting and crying for a few drops of knowledge. I am not nearly so vitally concerned over the law of capillarity as with the laws of heredity. How many moons Neptune has, and why Saturn wears a ring is rather irrelevant and immaterial as compared with explanation of the strange motley of attractions and repulsions, tastes and distastes which I brought into the world with me. Allowing generously for what I have *become*, who shall help me name the prenatal friends or

conspirators who made me what I *was* to start with?

Ancestors, then. Generally speaking, I believe in them. I believe *in* them even when I cannot go so far as to say that I believe *them* for what they say and do in their far posterity. I go further to admit, with Agnes Dean: "Most of my ancestors I like pretty well. It behooves me to mention them with respect, anyway (except those immediate to me), for the more remote they are, the more likely they would be to be your ancestors, too. . . . But I do not understand them especially, and I often find them both unreasonable and disconcerting. They limit me, and unsettle me for my environment." At their worst they are a sort of necessary evil. I do not quite see how I could have gotten along without the requisite number of them. And, at their best, they are a huge asset; not fluid, of course, but also neither subject to depreciation. At their best, I can count on them as allies. In all cases they are potently present if unseen; handy for blame, even though seldom shared with for praise.

And how I should like to interview some of them! It used to be enough to say of a man that he is "a chip off the old block." Nowadays we reckon that he is a chip off *many* blocks. I should like to examine critically a few of those

blocks. I should like to inquire if they realized all that they were handing down so illimitable a line. I should like to know if they feel the responsibility for my perfectly indefensible love of sparkles I cannot afford to buy, and my painful reaction to discord, and the various provincialisms of which I am confessedly ashamed. Likely they would sidestep liability, as many of their descendants do. Then I should keep carrying back my quest until I faced the originally guilty party—up a tree, perhaps, or in a cave. To be an ancestor is solemn business, very solemn and weighty. Merely to endow one's immediate offspring with a hooked nose or flat feet may not need to cause insomnia to the perpetrator. But to lay upon untold generations all sorts of moral embargoes and disqualifications, together with such fine tastes and ennobling aptitudes as may spread in the family tree; to put one's mark upon a far-off progeny that will not know the marker's name, is solemn business.

By the way, it just occurs to me that here *might* be an explanation of race suicide. Moderns are afraid to become ancestors. They might be willing to play the rôle of fathers and mothers, and still shrink from being ancestors. Just why the French are so much more timid in this particular than Teutons and

Latins might be hard to say. My personal opinion is that the *rationale* of small families is not so complimentary. Love of personal ease and freedom, disinclination to contract for shoe bills and such a few years hence, are probably the real deterrents. Despite the glosses of philanthropy ours is an intensely selfish age. Sometimes I fear that we shall lose the genius of self-sacrifice—so many of our women are losing it already. 'Tis a great day for dodging responsibility. Our motto is, "Let George do it"—or William or any other available person. So the best human stock on earth lets the poorest keep up the population.

But all this is quite aside from my purpose in calling up my forbears. I merely wish I could come up with the particular ancestor who accounts for my fondness for portholes. That is all I wanted to ascertain at the moment. Was he a Bonivard staring his heart out through his eyes at the chink in his dungeon wall? Or a galleyslave glimpsing blue sky and rainbow along his oar? Or a savage peering through the underbrush at his foe, or through the forest tops at the sun? Probably I never shall ascertain. But whoever he was, he put his brand upon me, so that portholes have always interested me more than anchors,

bowsprits, capstans, or rudders. The only sailboat I ever owned had two such glassy eyes in her tiny cabin. She was a sturdy little craft, albeit self-willed occasionally. I was exceedingly proud of her speed and her staunchness; of her towering sail, and of every rope in her rigging. But, in a way, I was proudest of all of her ports. I do not think I could have been content to own a yacht without ports. Not that they served any high purpose in her economy. But I knew they were there. And I often opened and closed them just for the fun of the thing. I polished them unreasonably, and admired them extravagantly—in unwitting deference to some unidentified ancestor, ages agone.

Well, then, since I cannot corner the proper ancestor, and compel him to confess, I might as well try to make such sense as I may of the *penchant* he bequeathed me. As a matter of fact, I do not object to it particularly; it is very much less dangerous and costly than a taste for fast horses and flying machines and stock-tickers. Incidentally, I have gotten a deal of innocent divertisement out of it. So far, therefore, as I am able to give an account of my fondness for portholes, it runs somewhat like this:

At the least the porthole is a canny device.

Say *un*canny, if you prefer. It can be so. I have seen it so when a great wave found ingress there or a vessel was sinking. Great, piteous, almost human eyes staring helplessly toward heaven as the Lusitania went down. Dead eyes as I saw them in the sides of a steamship half buried in the sands off Fire Island. Gone, use, significance, beauty. *Un*canny! But I like better my own word of description, *canny*. How long the history, who knows? It dates back, I suppose, to a mere hole in a vessel's skin, as the first rudiment of an eye was a pigment spot. Just an aperture for an oar or a gun or ventilation. A romance, likely, as the evolution of steel pens and printing presses and detachable collars. Part accident, as the phonograph or the art of etching upon glass or Cæsarean-section. Fortune ever has played into the hands of the apt-to-learn. Doubtless it had a part in the development of the modern porthole from some crude beginning. Be that as it may, the contrivance, as I have made its acquaintance, is exceedingly interesting. Immensely clever. Very daring. A triumph of handcraft. And admirably adapted to the uses it serves—like claws on a crab, or web feet on a duck, or a tail on a monkey. My stateroom porthole and I became friends at once. To me it was the canniest piece of equipment in that

cabin. With regret I bade it goodbye, hoping to meet it soon again, or one of the family.

But I pass to more portentous considerations. Portholes imply a voyage. They are more than mere windows, though the object be the same. You shall not find them on river-craft and other smooth-water boats, save occasionally, close to the water line. They suggest days and nights on the deep, and rough water, away from sight of land, perhaps. They are built to withstand the pound of huge seas and the lash of spray. They are supposed to keep out the ocean while they let in the light. In short, they stand for voyage; not a casual trip but a determined voyage.

I can recall, as a lad, my delight in a state-room on a ship or a berth on a train. They meant so much more than a parlor-car seat or a camp-chair. They gave a sense of pilgrimage, of going far, of *hegira;* in a sense, of faring into the unknown. One disposed his belongings and settled himself for a real journey. Day excursions never appealed greatly to me. Crowds, peanuts, lunch-boxes, and a pervasive air of restlessness—I do not recall that ever I enjoyed all that. The sense of notable destination was wanting. You traveled the length of a short leash of respite, and then trotted back. No sooner started than you began to wonder

when you would arrive. No stir for the imagination, no great call to the soul. I still feel the same. And I think most folks do. Looking across the Channel from a delightful spot in Wales, where God seems to have endowed everybody with a singing voice; looking across toward the Isle of Man, and watching the swift, lithe channel boats cut their white trail, I heard for the first time, the word "tripper," meaning excursionist, week-ender, and the like. And I who had recently traversed blue water —blue, green, gray, black—for ten consecutive days, always on and on, the same sea yet forever different, the same sky yet from different angle—fell to contrasting a "trip" with a "voyage." Seriously, I enjoyed the voyage itself, the sense and spell of it, more than anything I had yet seen or expected to see in Europe.

The voyage, the voyage! Isn't it *that* we crave the feel of, and the significance? Life, on its average day, is so absurdly extemporaneous and inconsequent. Fitful, too. Casually viewed, it lacks competent and justifiable destination. For the greater part, we are like passengers on a ferry, always getting on and off. No sooner on than the gong sounds and the chains rattle for going ashore. Scarcely time to sit down or to glance over the paper.

Always a train to catch, or a phone message to expect, or an appointment to keep. Always the same "vicious circle," as the logicians say. "Mother, don't hens ever lay anything except eggs?" plainted a lad as he glanced at the usual breakfast plate. Come to think of it, they don't seem to. Nor do the passing days show much greater variety. Only the same number of dishes. Only the usual ways of spending a dollar. And only the commonplace duties, dull, detached, dismal.

Until one masters the sense of *voyage*. Then even routine is lighted up. What passenger that loves the sea protests against the sameness of the days? With the tang of the wind in his nostrils, and such an appetite as only a seavoyage can gender, and vastness everywhere, and port toward which the rhythmic engines ceaselessly throb forward, who decries monotony on shipboard? The flash of a distant sail, a wisp of smoke on the horizon, flight of gulls, smell of familiar food in the galley, rush of water past the bows, call of the ship's bell and answering voice from the lookout—all worthful and wonderful when one is bent on voyage. The melancholy Dane was not sure of the voyage, was not persuaded of its *being* a voyage, could not quite believe in safe harbor. And his bitter soliloquy was the

result. Isn't it strange that one rarely reads of a suicide in midocean? Self-destruction from the deck of riverboats, bridges, trains, yet rarely where the door is most open and the issue most certain. Why? Why, indeed, except as the sense of voyage explains? Despair grows less desperate when one has the feeling of going on. It is when a man seems to swing round the same circle, moving but getting nowhere, striving and straining and yet always as far from a great port—then he begins to doubt the validity of keeping on.

"I see my way," shouted the poet of the eternities, "I shall arrive." Browning questioned neither the significance of the journey here nor the certitude of the pilgrimage hereafter. Life, for him, was a voyage. Tennyson *hoped* to see his Pilot face to face when he had crossed the bar. Browning never sang as plaintively as that. He declared: "I most unquestioningly believe. I say, faith is my waking life." Nothing short of that deep conviction can afford sense of life as voyage. To that voyage-consciousness must men come back if life is to regain its one-time dignity and splendor. A thousand baffling problems will be solved, a host of impudent evils cured, the hopeless fret and piteous aimlessness of the modern day vanish like morning mists under

the strength of the mounting sun when we think of and practice life as *voyage*.

So much portholes seem to imply. But more than that. Portholes take account of storm: such storms as only the sea can raise. Portholes are constructed to withstand all the furies that stalk the waves. Not as being therefore responsible for them; still less as soliciting their havoc, merely as reckoning with them and being prepared against them. I know there is a superstitious spirit which consistently declines to set guards against catastrophes, on the ground that preparation is invitation. Thus you shall have people, otherwise mentally solvent, who insist that a lightning rod attracts the bolt that would normally pass by unmolesting, who carry no insurance lest they inflame the fates, and who hesitate to admit their own good health except as they discreetly "knock wood." (Excuse me: they need reach no further than the blocks set on their shoulders.) What a world this were, as vile as any of the old hymnists called it, and presided over by an arch-fiend, if joy confessed and wise caution practiced constituted blasphemy against it. I should be ashamed of such a world, ashamed of its Creator, ashamed to stay in it longer than one could "his quietus make with a bare bodkin."

To all such direful folk I commend the stout confession of that brave spirit who had spent all his days fighting storm; and had come to believe in "the kindness which is at the heart of things, and the goodness of the veiled God."

But speaking of portholes; worse than the azure creed that cringes at the *sound* of storm is the fantastic philosophy that denies the *reality* of storm. If tornado and combing wave are not real, I do not know what is real. An umbrella is just as real as a sunshade; and both are just as real as the skies overhead or the pilgrim needing protection. Passing by the logomachy of this pleasant fallacy, I cannot imagine any disciple of it going to sleep with his ports open on a wild night at sea. A thoroughly drenched disciple of Dr. Coué is precisely as wet as anybody else—and as uncomfortable and protesting. The most ardent dogma is exceedingly hard to live by when one is cold and soaked to the skin.

When his critics described Turner's "Storm at Sea" as "soapsuds and whitewash," the painter replied: "I wonder what they think that storm was like. I wish they had been in it." Personal acquaintance with any sort of storm, at sea, on the desert, in a community, or in the soul itself, will be apt to convince any-

body of the *reality* of the thing. I do not wish harm to any of my friends—or others. I do not want them in peril or drowned, or even seasick. Still, I do wish, with Turner, that they had been in the storm whose description —nay, whose very objectivity—they decry. Experience is a keen rectifier. Even the most skeptical manifest all normal reactions under stimulus of pain and frost and grief. Their academic opinions are not usually for home consumption. Theirs is an ostrich philosophy.

Storm unreal? I should hesitate to say so in the presence of Father Damien and his leper-colony. I have not the effrontery to tell William Penn and George Fox that the gusts of persecution that tore them were less real than summer skies and freedom from headache. Let a hardier spirit than mine assure Garibaldi that the "hunger and cold and weariness, rags, blood, and death" which he promised his soldiers are mere phantoms of mortal mind; and Andrew Jackson that his shattered arm would hold a musket as well as any. I think he would be moved to shout, as once he did to his mutinous men: "Stand back! By the Eternal I'll shoot the first man that dares step from his tracks." The fires that burned Huss to a crisp may not have been "real" in the Berkeleyan sense, nor the wild beasts that

Paul met at Ephesus, nor the hemlock cup of Socrates. But granting so much as this, I do not know what to *affirm*. Must I go so far as to declare that Jesus' agony in Gethsemane was an imaginary thing, and that the cross on which he bled his life out—? Oh, yes, some go so far as *that;* denying the reality of the world-sin for which he died. As Edwin Booth protested when friends attempted to soothe his grief by quoting the soft, flaccid, pulseless words of conventional comfort, "I do know all this, at least as well as they do who tell me." Better, I think. Vastly better! Storm is real—or nothing is—hope, dream, health, goodness, love, God. So my porthole reminds me.

One further look and I regretfully leave the topic to which my ancestors seem to have committed me. Relatively speaking, a porthole is a small affair. I mean, by contrast to the size of the ship. Seen from a distance, portholes are tiny; mere shiny flecks on the hull. On closer acquaintance they grow. Through the largest of them a passenger may throw all his belongings, even himself. Big enough for the purpose. Big enough to let in the sun, and give glimpse of the sea, and frame a "handful of stars." There are advantages in limiting one's field of vision—as every astronomer and

microscopist will affirm. Broad views are not the only important sort. One may see too much at a time, and hence unobservantly. "Look at a tree," said Flaubert to his pupils. (Not a whole forest but a single tree.) "Look until you see what everybody else has seen, and then keep on looking until you see what nobody else has seen before." "Digamma," as they affectionately nicknamed one of my professors in Greek, got his name from a life-long study of the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet. Edison made a mistake when he lifted his gaze from storage batteries and phonographs to discuss the subject of human immortality. "Get thee to thine easel." Someone pronounced Coleridge "the most myriad-minded man since Shakespeare." But as soon as the singer of "The Ancient Mariner" began to scatter his genius he lost it. Theodore Roosevelt had that sort of mind, but he knew better than to use it, all at once, in too many directions.

When the sun waked me through my porthole, at sea, his whole majesty seemed to enter my room. On deck I should have had no such sense of proprietorship. And when earth's pale satellite looked in to bid me good night and pleasant dreams, I could forget how indiscriminate was the visit. And when a wave

flung itself against the glass angrily, balked, defiant, I was half glad I need not see all its partners in fury. Kind is that providence which often circumscribes our vision—by the diameter of a porthole, for instance.

One night I anchored my sailboat—she with the trim ports—in a little estuary on Long Island. 'Twas dark when the sail dropped; and I merely made certain of anchorage. Next morning birds woke me, singing immediately overhead. I had been aware of no such musical passengers. But the orison was unmistakable. And a glance through one of my precious portholes set me laughing. All I could see was a tree and marsh. Outside I should have oriented myself speedily and spoiled the fun. I should have lost the illusion, as in these broad-visioned days we most dismally do. Let me keep my laugh for a moment. No harm in a laugh at one's own expense. During the small hours of night the tide had slipped noiselessly out, swinging my craft close to the meadows and actually beneath the branches of a tree. And the gay birds were poking fun at me, I suppose, as was proper. But peeping quizzically through the little port over my berth, I could smile and romance and dream. Anathema upon him who, in Du Maurier's vivid phrase, would "blur the dream" rudely. And so I

gratefully remember my porthole, for the grace of a restrained vision.

In brief, I like portholes for these and many other reasons that might be named. I've no grievance against my ancestors—in this particular. On the contrary, I am much obliged to them, for one predilection, at least—portholes.

V

MY CAKE

According to a venerable aphorism, the truth of which we usually admit much as Margaret Fuller said she accepted the universe, "You cannot eat your cake and have it too." Naturally. A single experiment commonly suffices to validate the old saw, at least in the matter of bakestuff. But the suggested alternatives are not the only possible ones, as I learned recently—on cake. A tempting creation it was, of my favorite variety. If chocolate-layer had been the viand described in a famous bad bargain, I could understand Esau better. But not as concerns lentil-broth. Jacob might have kept that for himself, so far as I cared. My birthright would have been entirely safe as against the savor of that particular pottage.

Chocolate layer cake is different and far more seductive—for me. I do not expect to outgrow my fondness for it. The last indulgence I granted my beloved fox terrier, before they chloroformed him, was a generous portion of his favorite confection. So far as I could assure it he should fall into Lethe dreaming of mountains of chocolate. Besides many other

bonds between us was a fondness for the product of the cocoa bean. He would have whined joyously, and looked unutterable things out of his soft brown eyes, at sight and smell of the special cake I am thinking of. Though, to be frank, he would not have approved of my *disposition* of it. Dogs are more *openly* selfish than some of their masters are.

But, for that matter, my personal reaction was greedy enough when the delicious gift was unwrapped. Mine, mine, all mine; prepared for me by an indulgent friend who humors my weakness occasionally! Mine, mine! Never was a similar dainty more enticing. And I found myself estimating how large a sector one could safely consume at a sitting. Here modesty draws a veil. This is no confession of gourmand's pangs. The lesson came as I was deciding whether or not I could eat the entire cake before its toothsomeness departed. Sadly I realized that I could not hope to compass the task. I never knew but one man equal to it. His wife complained she could not keep a chocolate-layer in the house overnight. He had a record of twelve ears of green corn at a meal; and I've forgotten how many steamed clams, plus the usual concomitants, at a "bake." But, even in the presence of my edible treasure, I confessed judgment of mortal

limitations; and ended by giving away half of the cake, in order to save it, so to speak.

Most folks are moderately lavish with possessions they can conceive neither present nor future use for. Sometimes it would appear that of such is the kingdom of ordinary beneficence. We part with redundant possessions —nor always hilariously, at that. As children we were encouraged to enrich, with damaged or discarded toys, or outgrown story books, certain less favored playmates. At Christmas, perhaps, we went forth to play Santa Claus, bearing superannuated treasures: one-armed dolls, toy engines that would no longer "go," and a delightful sense of magnanimity. Precious little almoners, at no real cost to self! And the seed, thus early sown, reaches consummate bloom in—say, a Rummage Sale. Excuse me. I have no score against a second-hand business, as such, and conducted for gain. Many an almost priceless antique has come to glorious setting through the dealer in cast-off furniture. Every great library, every museum contains treasures barely rescued from the dust and clutter of garret and junk shop. Gainsborough's "Blue Boy," recently brought to America, and Millet's "The Angelus" declare the later and truer appraisal of time-marked treasures. All a critic need object to is the syndicating of

household rubbish, and capitalizing it as philanthropy, in that abomination of desolations, a Rummage Sale. By all means let others enjoy the cake you cannot personally devour; but baptize not, as largess, such disposition.

For my part, I resent being asked if I can "spare" what I share. The question is wretched compliment to the quality of my generous impulse, as well as to the recipient. The more comfortably and inexpensively one can part with time and substance, the less significant such outgo. In all final analysis, "the gift without the giver is bare." Speaking commercially, John Eliot could not "spare" the strength he spent in his apostolate to the American Indians. Nor could Mary Lyon and Mrs. Palmer "spare" the passion they burned out for the higher education of their sisters. Neither Lincoln nor his country could "spare" the life he lost by his unswerving devotement to his great ideal. Colonel George Waring could ill "spare" the investment he made in the sanitation of Cuba. France could not "spare" the money and manhood she poured out to preserve her national honor. Every "Community Chest" is glorified by contributions the donors could not "spare." My mother could not "spare" the price she paid for her

boys. Not the subtrahend, but the remainder declares the size of the gift. Let none speak disparagingly of such princely donatives as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Fund. One may hope they point to a new and healing brotherhood in privilege. Yet, huge as such gifts are, they probably represent no real privation, no blood-letting denial. At best they do not belong in the category with a certain widow's "two mites which make a farthing."

Apropos of gifts, there recurs memory of the most remarkable ever offered one. Typical too. Tomatoes. The donor drove up to my door with a load of them, the product of her garden. Would I like some? Naturally I was disposed to accept. They looked luscious as well as plentiful, by contrast to the yield of my diminutive farm. Still, one ought not to grab at a gift as a trout snaps at a fly. Sometimes the fly hides a hook. Moreover, a reasonable degree of modesty befits a beneficiary, whether of tomatoes or friendship or forgiveness. Apparently, I must have exemplified a proper, and in this instance, gratuitous, reticence. For, with a wave of her lean hand toward the wagon, and a suggestion of impatience in her voice, she clinched the offer; made it convincing and whole-hearted so to speak. "Might as

well take 'em. Got plenty more. If you don't get 'em, the hogs will." Whether or not I took advantage of such unreserved bounty, at the expense of the hogs, I cannot recall—I was so impressed with the alternative. But not for a cargo of tomatoes would I have missed so typical an instance of the spirit which usually passes for generosity. The species is disconcertingly common—like the portion of my chocolate cake which I gave away rather than let it spoil in the box.

My cake! Mine! All mine! What a deal of trouble those small pronouns gender! A world in which "mine" and "thine" were equitably apportioned would be heavenly enough for permanent abode. The possessive pronouns, with their vast involvements and implications, work all the havoc. The greatest common divisor of all the sins in the calendar is selfishness. *My* money, *my* land, *my* rights, *my* friends, *my* religion. Yes, even religion. If they could, men would annex Deity to their titular possessions, as the Hebrews did unblushingly. They would say, "My God," in an exclusive sense which precludes him from being the God of anybody else. As matter of sober fact, they do say it in precisely that fashion. We could dispense with police and armies, even the formal Decalogue itself, could

we but arrive at a brotherly *entente* about the possessive pronouns.

My cake, for instance. How far is it mine, solely and indefeasibly? As a representative property, has any other lover of such things, or any hungry passer-by, a right in it? May I keep it unchallenged? Make myself sick on it? Or let it mold in my care? I doubt if the case for invidualism, as respects possessions, has ever been more succinctly put than by the vineyard owner in a familiar parable. To the outcry of certain employees who felt themselves aggrieved he replied, with apparent finality, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" So far as he was concerned, the case was thrown out of court—and no appeal to a higher judiciary. But this question may be heard in a thousand phrasings to-day: sometimes pleadingly put, sometimes with great legal acumen, sometimes impudently. It is as handy to the laborer as to the employer. In fact, even so conservative a labor leader as Samuel Gompers insists that the hand-worker has a special right to use it as against the need of the community at large. The average man with brawn to sell or talent to display or money to invest resents the most delicate intimation that his property is not his to hold or trade in as pleases him. Inventor,

mechanic, artist, teacher, householder, manufacturer, in company with hod-carriers and bell-hops, fall back upon the ancient and discredited defense. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" You shall hear fathers ask it as concerning their children, husbands as concerning their wives, prodigals as concerning their time or their proclivities.

And the answer? The answer, written in a thousand laws as well as in the deepening experiences of life, is an unqualified and thunderous "No!" During the Great War we were not permitted to purchase sugar in peace-time quantities, nor even to hoard it in the cellar. And the dealer was liable to punishment for charging the price we were willing to pay. We could not buy passage on an outgoing ship without passport from Washington. A union mechanic, in certain localities, is forbidden to work on Saturday afternoons, except in emergencies, even to pay his rent or the doctor. Some States punish attempted suicide. The citizen is not at liberty to dispose of his own broken or desperate life except by the silent attrition of overwork or dissipation. We are not permitted to sing to ourselves, if it becomes a neighborhood nuisance; or to burn rubbish in our own dooryards except under certain conditions; or to let the snow lie on

our own sidewalks, much as we may enjoy seeing it there. We may not put our own paint on our own fence with our own brush on Sunday. Tradition has it that there was a New England Blue Law against a man's kissing his wife on the first day of the week. Puritanism, as such, is not dangerously rampant nowadays. Yet it is conceivable that, if I could have kept my chocolate cake long enough, I might have run amuck of a statute limiting the slice to be eaten at a sitting, and specifying the portion to be distributed among envious neighbors. Even so, I'd rather eat my allotted fraction in the peace of a civilized land, with a policeman to protect me in my restricted enjoyment, than take chances with my whole cake in some Bolshevik community. And furthermore, I'm not sure that, when thoroughpaced socialism gets its way, there will be cake, any more. The largest-scaled experiment thus far conducted in Communism seems to find trouble in securing *bread* enough to pass around. In such a "perfected" civilization one could not be sure of his own wig or false teeth; they would belong to the state. What incentive to invent a new device or to save a dollar—even to bake a cake—if Karl Marx's law of distribution were adopted—"From each according to his ability to each

according to his need"? Who is to appraise both my ability and my need?

But, taking things as they are, a slice of my cake, representatively considered, goes to the government—a fairly large slice, one might say. What with war-taxes, inheritance-taxes, and all the rest, the list is rather long. And the larger my cake, the bigger slice the government takes. At the cheapest, civilization is expensive, and growing more so. But I often wonder why we are so resentful of the portion we pay for the sake of keeping the remainder. Even as a fairly good American who loves his country I hate taxes. There's no other bill comes to my desk so unwelcome as a tax-bill. I know such things are inevitable, yet I dread them as one ordinarily does a surgical operation. Indeed, I suppose it might be easier to part with an appendix than with the money the government takes. Few more lugubrious files of folk can be seen on earth than the line which stretches back from the tax-collector's window. Not a smile to lighten the gloom; not a joyous step forward—except to be out of the misery. As between the twin inevitables with which all must reckon, I have known pilgrims of the long road to welcome *death*, but not one to hail tax-day with a song.

Yet why so solemn? The duty of paying

our way in the commonwealth stands for a shining array of privileges. Granted that a distressingly large portion of the billions on which we pay war-taxes was wasted; that paving and public buildings cost too much to the tax-payer; that the patrolman on our beat is more skillful at terrorizing the boys than in protecting our property; granting all this and what more of the same sort may be alleged. War waste was inescapable if we were to play a man's part in the greatest conflict of the ages. And who wants unpaved streets, or a city without police protection? Taken by and large, ours is the gardenland of the world; never so notably as to-day, by comparison. To be so surly about giving up the governmental slice of our cake is poor compliment to us.

Then there's the sector we owe to the less favored. If taxes represent the debt of weakness to strength, philanthropy stands for the debt of strength to weakness. We pay our tithe to the state or church as an admission that these do for us what we cannot so well do for ourselves. But our *gifts*, at their best, are the succor we extend to those who cannot win it for themselves. "I am debtor to—" confessed a great voice. And naturally we should be listening for the names of parent and teacher, synagogue and native land. None

comes to opulence of purse or mind without incurring such obligation. In one aspect we are as little self-made as sunsets and harvests are. Wretched is he who forgets or ignores his debt for value received. Paul would have been quick to admit such claim—all of it. But his list of creditors is far more significant and unusual: "I am debtor to Greek and barbarian"—debtor to those from whom he had received least; debtor to those for whom he could do most. In recognition and discharge of that transforming obligation he won the splendor of his name.

The debt of strength to weakness: such was the debt Agassiz was trying to pay to his pupils, and John Howard to the victims of English prisons, and Garrison to the slave, and Wesley to Cornish miners. Their sense of advantage seemed to bind them over to enrich others. Such is the spirit of every beautiful movement for human betterment. Henry H. Rogers, building a temple to his father and mother, in the town of his boyhood, was merely attempting to make sentimental payment on account of a debt no son can pay in full. Andrew Carnegie, building libraries and organs for communities he *never* had seen, approached more nearly to the Pauline *motif*. Michael Angelo, laying his mark upon Raphael,

Francis of Assisi thrilling himself into his novitiates, Jane Addams at Hull House, Grenfell in Labrador, chorus that sense of obligation whose discharge illumes a world. Anywhere that superiority of skill or strength or message becomes a commission to enrich others, the kingdom of brotherhood hastens.

Or, if one prefers to think of it thus, say that this confession of debt to the needy is merely another fashion of paying our obligation to those who blessed us. As David did in the case of the crippled Mephibosheth. One night David fell lonely for Jonathan. Love leaped in his heart again, crying for vent. If only Jonathan could return to be crowned with a fresh gift! "It is not when love is shallow that it hurts. It is when love is deep that it feels, when the flowers lie fresh on the grave, how much more it ought to have done." In an anguish of pent affection, David cried for somebody to bless in the dead friend's name and for love of him. "Is there none left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan, my brother's sake?" Somebody named Jonathan's crippled son. So Mephibosheth got a permanent place at the king's table, fell heir to the bounty David was longing to heap upon his great friend. So in a thousand fragrant and sparkling forms, love

articulates itself to the stabilizing or healing of others, counting itself richened by the prodigality of its gift. All of which means the diminution of my cake by another portion.

May I keep for myself what remains? Not quite; not quite. After the government, in its various aspects, has taken toll of my property, and I've met my full debt to the world's need, I owe a sacrifice to my own growth. According to celestial assay, "Life's strength standeth in its sacrifice." For the sake of highest fruitfulness a man must prune himself. The gift reacts upon the giver, greatening instead of depleting him. Said Charles Pratt, the oil magnate, "I never got any happiness out of my money until I began to give it away." When all's said and done, money buys so little for its possessor. Something to eat, something to wear and place to sleep; not much else. As one of the Vanderbilts confessed: "I don't see what good all this money that you say I have does *me*. I have never seen it. My secretary wears better clothes than I do. I have dyspepsia, and cannot eat so much as my butler does." Too much cake—doomed to spoil on one's hands! If Whitman was right, and "I am not all contained between my hat and my boots," then why should not part of my cake minister to the culture of the part of me with which

hatter and shoemaker are not concerned? 'Tis a pity to be impoverished by one's so-called assets. Income, strength, skill, talent, love—these are under solemn bonds to bless their possessor. Nor can they so function till they are put out to service of the noblest selfhood. My cake shrinks in volume, the while, that what remains to me may help make and keep me more of a man.

How much is left? Who shall say? Who can speak for anybody else? The prime question is not how much I can consume. The question is how much of a man I want to be. Usually, there will be plenty left for personal use. The ancient declaration, set in the stars by Jesus, is unabridged. "Man doth not live by bread only"—or cake—but by dream and truth and obedience, by reverence, self-restraint and passionate "struggle for the life of others."

VI

DUSTING THE CHAIR

PARDON me for mentioning the incident. 'Tis not within my purpose to imply that the dusting was superfluous, nor that the task was ineptly done. Up and down the back of an ample porch-chair, back and forth across its broad seat and along both arms, traveled the improvised duster—a newspaper, as chanced. Make certain the operation was thoroughly performed. One could have risked laying a lunch on that particular chair-bottom by the time the candidate for its comfort was ready to sit down. Somehow, I sensed trouble as the lady with the threatening news-sheet approached. Had the chair been endowed with powers of locomotion and my timidity, there would have been a forthright retreat. No use to brave the stabbing look I saw fall upon that chair. In such circumstances the only normal recourse is flight. By good fortune or clever management one may ward off a *physical* blow. Conceivably, he may dodge, or even strike back. But from the menace of a deadly glance there is no escape save to flee. "I killed her

with my tongue," groaned "The First Settler," in Will Carlton's metered story by that name. Just a few brutal words, with their piteous sequel, and his child-wife, as he called her, lay storm-drenched and pulseless on their cabin floor. Done to death by a murdering tongue! But with a cruel eye he might have compassed the same result, and far less noisily. There is a look which slays.

But I must not surcharge with unintended venom the glance that fell upon a certain chair. It was not as truly malignant as critical. It was the flash of what someone calls "flaw-seeing eyes." That sort of eye has an abnormal sense of horizontals and perpendiculars. A picture slightly awry or a door-frame out of plumb constitutes a personal affront. I suppose that the famous leaning tower of Pisa would have thrown into convulsions such a flaw-sensitive mortal. No aspect entirely pleases; no gem is perfect; no act quite meritorious. He can descry a blemish further than most folks can see a church steeple. A speck on his linen blots out the stars for him; and a few flecks of dust on the furniture fairly set his teeth on edge. For the flaw-seeing eye ours is a botched and indefensible world—out of line, out of focus, out of joint. Without being so requested I am sorry for him—or her.

And I am still more sorry for the world of folks and things on which falls that withering glance.

"A cock to Æsculapius," suggested the ancient. Perhaps that sort of offering would suffice for the god of healing, but not for the god of fault-finding. Poor blind Momus may always count a host of worshipers, most of whom never even heard his name. To him they bring their morning orisons of petulance —because the day dawns cloudy or a collar band is tight; because the coffee is cold or the postman comes tardily. To him also they present their evening adorations of complaint —for every conceivable, and many an inconceivable, mischance of the day. Nay, their Muezzin calls them to prayer every waking hour. Whom they have been ignorantly worshiping, all the radiant as well as the gloomy years, him declare I unto them. His name is Momus—criticism deified. Tradition is that Momus grouched because folks were not built with windows in their breasts, so that the cynic could see their very thoughts. If Momus had a temple as Apollo had, and Jupiter, the streets would be black with his votaries going to worship. You cannot please the disciple of Momus; he will be displeased that you try.

When a certain famous statue was exposed

to public view, the critic was present, as always. He said the nose was too long; and, to placate him, a ladder was set up against the statue, and the sculptor essayed as if to rectify his error, letting a handful of marble chips fall as he made the motions of chiseling. According to legend, the critic was satisfied. He even admitted as much, and turned away with the smug look of a public benefactor—which proves conclusively to me that he was only a neophite in fault-finding. Had he been a full-fledged apostle, he would have examined the fallen chips microscopically, or insisted upon personally making the alteration—except that your critic never constructs anything. Or, most likely of all, he would have sniffed and declared the statue hopeless. Oh, I know his tribe so well! Haven't I tried in vain to make friends with them—on the general assumption that they must be right and I wrong? Haven't I gone in terror of them more than of God himself? In the lodge, at church, on the street, in business and society—everywhere, as ubiquitous as the atmosphere, almost; knowing neither season nor restraint except for the purpose of striking a more poisonous fang.

But I have wandered too far from the porch chair. Sometimes I remind myself of my favorite fox terrier. In the main he was as

sensible a dog as ever answered a master's voice. And the singleness of his affection would have shamed many a human friend. But he had a most exasperating fondness for side-tracking. You never could be certain that he would hold to the main line of his errand. Let a fowl come in sight, or a rabbit cross his path, and he was off like a flash to the chase, returning usually with a chop-fallen look at my word of recall. Doubtless the excursion afforded both exercise and entertainment—for *him*. But my personal reaction was far from pleasurable. I preferred him to keep his original direction. So I ask my readers' indulgence for this digression, and the heat thereof. Really, I had no intent to excoriate the white-haired old lady with the impromptu duster; and if her self-sacrificing devotion had been yielded to the cause of foreign missions, I should not have demurred. Had she been a relative of mine, I should have been proud of her—except perhaps when she fell a-dusting. But her special industry, that Sunday afternoon, was teasingly suggestive.

In the first place, it seemed a rather ungenerous animadversion upon the hotel management, not to mention previous occupants of the offending chair. All the furniture on that spacious veranda had been dusted, that morn-

ing, as I could testify. And every sitter, since, had inadvertently, at least, helped to complete the process. Seriously, I do not think the implied aspersion was warranted. No dust flew under the lash of the newspaper. And I should have been glad to take, without fee, the case for the defense of the hotel servant whose duties had apparently been so poorly discharged that they must be undertaken by a guest. Have it as you will, but, to me, there's an almost incredibly vast amount of fidelity in the world, especially on the part of Bridget and Hans and Sambo. Over against the scamped work of the few, set the painstaking, if mirthless, dutifulness of the many. Else would the world not get on at all. We are grotesquely inconsistent. We snap at a special piece of neglect as if it were archetypal, and then naïvely fall back upon a thousand instances of faithfulness, which we accept as we do the tides and the certainty of sunrise and the mercy of God. Just a moment, if you please. There is no need whatever of assuming so pharisaic an attitude toward a particular chair. My lady with the improvised duster had probably reached that suburban hotel, at forty miles an hour or better, in a train driven by an engineer she had never seen, over rails the safety of which was certified by ordinary track-walkers and the like. She

had come down to dinner in an elevator constructed and inspected by uninspired mechanics, and operated, perhaps, by a menial who had never before set foot in the cab. She had eaten her meal without certification that the milk had been pasteurized or the goblet decently washed. The very newspaper brandished so defiantly as the sign of cleanliness might have been infected with deadliest germs. In brief, she had taken, without misgiving, a thousand greater risks than were involved in occupying an undusted chair. So I smiled to myself as she attacked the offending object of her impassioned zeal.

To me the marvel is, not that an occasional switchman falls asleep at his post, at peril or cost of lives, but that the average switchman may be trusted to keep awake; not that, now and again, a line-soldier turns poltroon, but that file upon file of our brothers in uniform will march unflinching into the very jaws of death; not that the exceptional chair goes undusted, but, rather, that the great majority of chairs are regularly garnished. In a way the most important feature of Westminster Abbey is its floor. On that you move from shrine to shrine, from tablet to sarcophagus, forgetting that the floor is there. The better laid it is, the more likely to be ignored or taken for

granted. Tesselated, timbered, or set with white expanse of marble, who commonly pauses to appreciate its strength or smoothness? We are interested in groined arches or frescoes, rose window or altar, and stand secure with gaping mouths or misty eyes. Normally we assume the pavement, which is precisely the thing we ought not to do, whether in fane or life itself. Somebody says it takes a real artist to lay a first-class floor. By such test, then, one may appraise the artistry of God. With all sorts of silent fidelities and unfaltering devotion on the part of his humble servitors—hewers of wood who cut close to the line, drawers of water who know the way to the spring and who bend their necks to their limpid burden—with such faithful folk God lays the pavement across which earth's shining sons move to distinction and applause. Spite of cavils and catastrophe, it remains true that the average man can be trusted—is trusted—to do his stint. Unnoticed, unthanked probably, dogged even, he expects to lay his bricks or sweep his sidewalk, or "carry his message to Garcia." And usually he does it.

"One feast of holy days, the crest,
I, though no churchman, love to keep;
All Saints—the unknown dead that rest
In God's still memory folded deep:

The dumbly brave who did their deed,
And scorned to blot it with a name,
Men of the plain heroic breed,
Who loved Heaven's silence more than fame."

But the zeal of my porch companion with the news-sheet started other ruminations. For example, this: that, in her opinion, no chair had any excuse for being dusty. Her ideal world would be dustless, I suppose. But, as a matter of universal observation, that is not the sort of world we inhabit. Ours is a dusty planet. Concerning the moon or Saturn I am not informed. Maybe the conjectured tenants of Mars would not recognize a dust-cloth if they saw one. But on earth there is soot, there is grime, there is dirt of many species. One can write his name almost anywhere he pleases—in dust. Industry itself raises dust, clouds of it. Coal mine, sawmill, marble quarry, factory—each manufactures dust as one of its invariable by-products. You can localize your whereabouts, often, by the sort of dust you must breathe. The smoke-pall which overhangs Pittsburgh, making its insidious deposit on hovel and mansion alike, is a sort of municipal trademark. Even God's vast workshop is by no means dustless. Herculaneum and all its sinful works were buried, fathoms deep, in volcanic dust. Every cooling summer breeze,

as well as every tornado, carries dust on its wings. Scientists tell of the star-dust of which the silent spaces of the universe are full. "If I ascend up into heaven," I shall find dust. 'Tis a dusty if wonderful world. And while I am not compounding any felony with unnecessary dirt, certainly entering no caveat against the judicious use of the featherduster or any of its ilk, I am merely accepting the ubiquitous fact of dust. No particular corner of the footstool of God will stay immaculate after being cleaned.

Among the traditions of my boyhood was one to the effect that every son of the soil must consume a peck of dirt during his earth tenancy. If the spinach was unusually gritty, or picnic sandwiches caught an unwonted amount of cinders, let not the eater therefore worry. The overplus would doubtless be credited on his account, and the disagreeable necessity be the sooner done with. I cannot recall my precise reaction under stress of the argument. Still, I think the old weather-beaten quip did me good. It helped me to accept a reasonable amount of imperfection, acclimatized me to inevitable dust, made me tolerant of things that are. I do not mean *all* things that are: merely things and situations that *inevitably* are.

There's a deal of sanity in the old saying that "What cannot be cured must be endured" —and without too sour a visage either. But I, for one, need to be certain, before I set my face to endure it, that an evil of body or plague of spirit *can't* be cured. No discipleship of the old French school of "*laissez faire*" for me: no enervating plea for the "*status quo.*" If valiancy of protest against any human betterment were reason enough for leaving things as they are, no Augean stables would have been cleansed, and every inveterate evil would have a clear field. "Let us alone," is the timeless cry of the destroying spirit. No others howl so vehemently against being disturbed in their impious tenancy as do squatters on the soil of the king's domain. The first precaution of a bad cause is to entrench itself behind political fences and vested interests, and to adopt a high-sounding slogan of personal liberty. Usually, the genuine protagonist of any great reform may gauge, by the bitterness of his struggle, the righteousness of the cause he champions. Doubtless it is true that evil is self-destructive; that, in the long run, it defeats itself. The trouble is that the "long run" is too piteously long; and, especially, that the wrong people make use of the argument for inaction. Patience ceases to be a virtue when

it puts up with evitable hurts. Forbearance in the presence of the foes of life is a coward's refuge. Without the flame of Wendell Phillips, and the anguish of Abraham Lincoln, not to mention the torrent of blood that crimsoned a continent, human slavery *might* have died, eventually, by its own hand. Conceivably, any sort of Prussianism, like certain self-limited diseases of the body, might run its full course and cease to be, apart from a world-agony to end it. You will hear it said, even, that the Volstead Act has lengthened instead of shortening the reign of King Alcohol. Personally, I disbelieve all such pretty sophistries as firmly as I disbelieve that two plus two can equal five. Evil is forever ready to fight for its life: goodness is not always so prompt. In the paramount clashes life must pit itself against life, be willing to die for its cause, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

But my ink has turned red again; and I am in peril of the sort of misplaced emphasis for which I smiled at my porch companion with her duster. There are issues so overweening that they cannot be taken too seriously, and there are other issues so trifling as not to be worth dignifying as issues at all. To confuse the two, to put the small for the great, is to leave no zest for the great. Of Philip II of

Spain it was said that the significant and the insignificant interested him equally. As a consequence he was apt to exhaust himself on trifles before he got around to the majesties of life. Similarly with folks who take minor annoyances as tragically as one should take catastrophes. Pity to spend, tilting at windmills, life's splendid force that is needed for slaying dragons. "Not failure but low aim is crime," sang Browning. To give undue attention to the dust on a chair is to practice low aim and also to fail in the event. Ours is an imperfect world. It is next to, if not altogether, impossible to keep the fly out of the amber, and scratches from human flesh, and frictions from everyday fellowship. Hypersensitiveness is a disease. It unfits the soul. It depletes us before we reach the real battle-line. To accept the universe with its minor flaws reckoned in and allowed for; to overlook a hundred petty jolts and discomforts because our gaze is fixed on the consummation; to be able to smile at thorns and gnats as we fare forward, is one test of the grade of a man.

But my porch episode suggests one thing more; that the world, as we find it, is fully up to the standard of most of its critics. Few, if any of us are entitled to ask special dispensations of ease or asepsis. Unfortunately, caste

grows in any climate. In somewhat rarified forms you shall find as much in Massachusetts or Maryland as India must confess to. Sense of personal superiority is one of the slyest afflictions of humanity. It comes without specific invitation, and grows, full size, without self-recognition. Often the proudest mortal is he who boasts most of his humility. Indeed, a self-conscious and well-advertised humility is the most insidious and fatal sort of pride. I always tremble for the security of his moral footing when a man takes off his hat to his own righteousness. "The sound of that singing," observed May Sinclair, concerning one of her characters, "made Ransome feel noble; and there is nothing more insidiously dangerous than feeling noble." From the altitude of his exalted self-appreciation Ransome fell wretchedly that same night.

But, at the moment, my solicitude is not for moral lapses. I am thinking, rather, of the peril of depreciating the earth of our sojourn. Notwithstanding its obvious defects and hardships, its temptations and futilities, ours is a pretty good world. Of it, as concerning life itself, Browning's line is pungently true: "I count [it] just the stuff to try the soul's strength on." Take it altogether, it is so much better world—so much more just, so much more

dazzlingly beautiful, so much more interesting and opulent—than its critics could have produced with the same material, that their quips and snarls at it seem inane when they are not indecent. Viewing it piecemeal, no doubt they could suggest improvements, as I who could not, to save my life, construct a watch, may fault the length of its hands or the few seconds it loses in a week. But while the casuists were leaving out the possibility of pain, I fear they would make impossible the fine thrill of joy. And while they were hacking away the apparent injustices they might easily kill the potencies of growth and grandeur. Once a friend of mine, because a tree that took a hundred years to attain majority cast too much shade on his lawn, cut it down. He got rid of the shade. Also he destroyed the sentinel that he could not replace during a lifetime, robbed his dwelling of protection from summer glare, from winter blasts, and sabers of lightning, and sent the song birds elsewhere with their sunrise chant and twilight minstrelsy. This is about as far as the ordinary critic sees when he sets out to improve upon the divine administration.

Take it all together, I say, the world is an infinitely kinder place than one could build for himself. Who but God would have thought

of putting the velvet on a peach, or kissing an apple into blushes, or patterning with inimitable skill the wing of a common moth? Who but God would have made springs run ice-cold, and winds clean the air, and the sands carry gold? Who but God would have spent such pains attiring a scarlet tanager, or speckling a trout, or springing an arc of radiance across the back of a retreating storm? And when we consider the myriad adaptations of the world to the hungers of the body and heart of a man, it is like trying to span the ocean with a pair of hands.

As to such a world not being good enough for its tenants—there I lose my patience. It is so much too good for the average pilgrim through it that he will need to strain morally, to his utmost, so as not to be ashamed in the presence of it. Concerning a few of its heroic sons the record is: "Of whom the world was not worthy." But it was left to a grateful descendant to say that for them. Had they said it for themselves, I should have discredited their claim. I do not like to hear any man boast his grade at the expense of the world that nurtured him and showed him its glory and braced him by its head winds. Moreover, I do not believe him. His is the bluster of a merchant at the verge of bankruptcy. It is

the pitiful defiance of one *in extremis,* like Daniel Webster's last vaunt against death—"I still live." When I pause to admit how the ordinary mortal treats his portion of the planet, how wantonly he treads down its field-flowers, how heedless he is of its laws of physical and psychic hygiene, how blind to its open doors and how spendthrift of its treasures, I am moved to confess, on his behalf, that the world is about a hundred times *too good for him.* Let him reverse his glass and inspect himself. Astronomers by no means agree how sunspots affect our climate; but the spots on the cynic's soul poison the air of a neighborhood. Instead of complaining because the morning is gloomy let him try to count the radiant days he has seen. Instead of rebelling at the necessity of earning a living by sweat of brow, let him contemplate the lovely things his wages will buy. Instead of faulting the dust on the chair, he ought to be grateful there is a chair to sit in—and drop into it long enough to enumerate afresh the occasions he has for thanksgiving.

VII

NEWSIES

"WUXTRY, wuxtry!" (*Sun*, *Star*, *Moon* or whatever journalistic luminary happens to be in the ascendant). "Wuxtry! All about the ———!"

All about the what? In the name of our murdered English, what *did* he say? To be sure. That's the point—for *you*, but not for the newsboy. For, while you are attempting to decide what he said, permit me to intimate that your dilemma is part of his game. He did not *intend* you to understand in advance. He reckons that, by the time you have run the gamut of possible interpretation of his cry—flood, fire, football, riot, homicide, wreck—you will be ready to transfer a nickel to his palm. "Wuxtry, all about —!"

Quite unwitting, he is a clever psychologist, is the "newsy." For one thing, he knows the value of the Great Noise. From those primitive days in which the savage trusted his ears sooner than his eyes, we have brought down into the refinements and decorums of modern life a certain hypersensitiveness to sound. As the snap of a twig or the swish of underbrush

set our forbears alert, so a stealthy footstep or a creaking board arrests us. Any mysterious noise may make our flesh creep and our hair seem to rise. Of a famous parricide it was said that the twittering of innocent birds in the trees brought on an ague. I do not think I am timider than most; yet have I often been ashamed of the power of unidentified and surreptitious sounds to disturb me. Superstition itself feeds upon the suggestiveness of unaccountable movements of sound waves. Even so stodgy and sensible a Briton as Dr. Samuel Johnson was prey to silly terrors. The falling of a leaf into the sea of midnight quiet, the rustle of a garment, the gnawing of a mouse may produce mental commotion altogether disproportionate to the cause.

As between the blind and the deaf, one might expect suspiciousness to lodge at the door of the former. A world shut away from the eye would seem so much more awful than a world closed against the ear. Yet is the case precisely opposite. Naida, groping her way toward you, in the famous canvas, is typical of the trustfulness of the blind—those who "have never seen the moor" and "have never seen the sea," yet seem to know "what the sea is like" and "what the moor must be." Past piteously closed shutters, there break radiances

of understanding and high-lights of truth which almost rebuke our instinctive pity. *Deaf* but *seeing* Helen Keller might have discovered this to be a far less beautiful world. Not withheld sight but partially withheld sound works to poison and unfit the soul. As a half-cynical friend used to quote, in mocking defense of his easy morals: "What the eye doesn't see, the heart won't grieve over." But he could not say so much for the ear. What the ear doesn't hear, or partly hears, puts a sword in the soul. A postulation of partial deafness for Herod and Caligula, for the Duke of Guise and Robespierre might help to soften the world's judgment upon them. To be forever under the necessity of supplying hidden meanings and piercing out incompletely heard sentences would lay tremendous strain upon kinder disposition than theirs. "Pity the blind," of course, as their appealing placards solicit, but double the meed of compassion for the deaf. In their prison-house breed most easily those parasites that destroy peace. What the hard-of-hearing person *misses*, in ordinary human commerce is, for him, presumptively, so much more revelatory and portentous than the fragments he catches, one can hardly blame him for his distrust.

This by the way only. I was thinking,

rather, of the dominion of the Big Noise. And, as if to furnish illustration, suddenly, in memory, there boomed the defiance of the Giant in a favorite nursery tale. I could hear it again, just as I used to hear it, with chills running up and down my spine, long, long ago:

> "Fe, fie, fo, fum
> I smell the blood of an Englishman."

The more sonorously the curdling challenge was repeated, the more I marveled at Jack's temerity. How dare a Giant-killer, even, flaunt such a menacing voice? Vicariously, I permitted myself to quake for him, rather enjoying the experience at safe distance—like those patriots who fought the war from their armchairs. The whole legend was real to me. And no wonder. For, as we now know, thanks to the labors of Grimm, Andersen, Frazer, and others, every such bit of folklore pulses with the red blood of primitive life. Always the threatening ogre to be encountered, and slain by, or dispatched. Always the horrific, minatory, booming voice.

Always: nor, as yet, stripped of its browbeating power. Few moderns can boast emancipation from vassalage to the Big Noise. Knowing perfectly well the absurdity of it, we instinctively jump at the crash of a thunder-

clap rather than at the scimeter-flash of the lightning. Like animals, and with rare exception, we are stampeded by salvoes of great sound. Yon newsboy bawling his "Wux-try! all about the ———!" simply trades on an inveterate susceptibility. He reckons that, if he continues to shout long and lustily enough, his fortune is made for the day. Any item that justifies a Big Noise is grist to his mill. With the content and bearings of his tidings he is as impersonally concerned as the wire over which the item was ticked out; and as disinclined as the average practitioner to take his own medicine. Given a noise compelling enough, he can market his wares.

As every salesman knows. I am always amused at certain advertising sheets which find their way to my desk styled "The Silent Salesman." "There ain't no such animal." Advertising is printed noise, chiefly, catching the ear through the eye. A merchant can howl as vociferously in type as by use of a "barker" in front of his shop. And he can be certain of carrying much further. If he wishes to lift a great voice, he will buy an entire page in the prints. Noise still has no ready substitute for getting the ear of the world. Blow a horn. Ring a bell. Fire a gun—law permitting. Mount a platform. Unfurl a banner with a

legend that can be read at a hundred yards. As we still phrase the method, "Get the ear of the public," at any cost.

Which is precisely what the demagogue does. He gets the ear of his constituency. Not their reason, not their judgment, not their discrimination, but their *ears*. Without disrespect to a truly eminent American, this is what he got by his famous refusal to "crucify Labor on a Cross of Gold." He caught the *ear* of the country. His outcry won him the nomination for the Presidency. His name flew as sound travels. Millions stayed not to inquire if he were trained also in economics, or steeped in historic lore, or profound in statecraft. All these he might be—or not. What matter? His was an oratund and compelling voice. He could be heard across a continent, forth and back. And his famous "Sixteen to One," heralded in such magisterial tones, sounded like a postscript to the Decalogue.

Here, then, always, and under all forms of government, is both the power and the peril of the Big Voice. Whether trumpeting truth or fallacy, calling to height or bathos of humanity, it lays its pervasive spell. Bewitching of ear seems to involve perversion of moral sense and eclipse of sanity. One never can forecast the final issue, in any grave crisis of

history, until the last thunderous voice has boomed its defiance. Cataline and Cicero in Rome, Danton and Rousseau in France, Bradlaugh and Gladstone in Britain, Nietzsche and Eucken in Germany, Trotsky and whatever tribune of the people there be in Russia to-day, compete for domination. Between the counter-claims of labor and capital the ears of the modern industrial world are almost split. Noise is "no respecter of persons" or truth or justice. And, in these bedlam days, it often seems as if the ultimate victory must go to the more vociferous side of any sharp controversy. Perhaps, if we could mute, for a brief season of counsel and understanding, all hysterical if well-meaning cries of the Big Voice, we might find our way out to industrial peace. Alas, that too often, in the world's broad arena, as Napoleon observed concerning the arbitrament of arms, God *seems* to be on the side of the heaviest sound. Alas, that, in vast human issues, the event should jump at the more tumultous roar. Alas for the tragedy of needing to relearn, in every succeeding age, what Elijah learned at the cave-mouth when God passed by—and was not in whirlwind, earthquake or fire.

Nor has religion escaped the confusion and contumely of such experience. How could she?

Stressing always, and finding her highest sanctions in, "voices from the beyond," she has often mistaken volume of sound for freight of meaning. She has had her disciples as well as her apostles of the Big Noise. Across the centuries you shall hear them: pontiff hurling anathema at pontiff, Council screaming at Council, great leaders, as Athanasius, Hildebrand, Calvin, Laud, trumpeting their ecclesiastical shibboleths deafeningly, heralds of accord overplaying their respective parts in the symphony. How the Leader of the Orchestra must smile—to save heartbreak! As if maximum sound were maximum service. Still, as of old, the apostolate of stridency. Noise wins —too oft. "What do you suppose the Pope cares for the opinions of a German boor like you?" thundered the papal delegate at Luther. "The Pope's little finger is stronger than all Germany. Do you expect the princes to take up arms for you—you, a worm like you? And where will you be then?" screamed the legate. "Where I am now," came the unterrified answer, "in the hands of Almighty God." God be thanked for a man unafraid of the Big Sound of a coercive church. But God be lenient when that same dauntless reformer boomed his own demands, a few years later, in the Sacramentarian controversy.

"Wux-try! Wux-try!"—the mental arrest of the Big Noise. "All about the ———!" *That* time I almost caught it. But no! The "newsie" is too clever for that. He knows the challenge of the suspended sentence. If I understood what he is heralding, I might easily decide that I am not interested. Prize fight? I do not care to read about it. The latest chapter in some underworld tragedy? Spare me. I wish none of its sordid details. If I must be informed on the subject, I can composedly wait for the regular editions. But riots in a European capital, or the President's latest manifesto, or the sinking of a Titanic—such tidings get me where I live. It may be just such an event that my "newsie" is crying. And I buy his paper, at war-prices, only to fling it aside in disgust. Shrewd little merchant: he trades on pique of the suspended plot. He calls to universal curiosity concerning the unknown or uncertain. He plays on the disquiet of the soul. We want to know, even though knowledge, once had, is a dubious possession. And we want to know as soon as somebody else does.

"Oh, I saw that before," complained a youngster as he flung down a book in disgust. He had no time to spend upon established certitudes and familiar situations. Instinctively, if unwisely and sometimes unrighteously,

the tentacles of mind reach out for fresh facts. Inveterate, incorrigible, insatiate longing for knowledge. At its noblest it explains the triumphs of science, the glories of modern civilization, the mastery of self. At its lowest it stands for all those morbid curiosities which thin where they do not destroy the soul. At the zenith you have the most august quest: "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even unto His seat!" At the nadir is the debasing, wanton search for a fresh sensation.

In my native State, years ago, was in colloquial use a strange expression, "I want to know"—pronounced as only those who have heard it can appreciate. It by no means implied that the user of it wanted to know any particular thing, or was even interested in your recital. It was merely a manner of indicating astonishment, surprise, or polite assent. Repeat an incredible tale, describe an unusual experience, or merely observe that some neighbor was repainting his fence, and your auditor was apt to reply, "I want to know." Better pedigreed at least, than our current inanity, "I'll tell the world." 'Tis an instance of fall from high estate of an ennobling cry. "*I want to know.*" There's blood in it, and the quickened beat of eager hearts, and

the passion of unconquerable longing, and the quest of the infinite. In it are dream and tears, star-eyed hope and stinging frustration, throb and travail and triumph. Frantic hands clutching at veils that intervene; brave hands pushing back boundaries; aspiring hands reaching among the stars. The yearning of the ages and the unresting search of to-morrow. The *wanting*, the *needing*, the importunate *demanding* to *know*.

Last night, for the first time, I adjusted, for my own pleasure, the ear-pieces of a radio outfit. I heard the crackling of static, then a plaintive tone rising and falling as the operator caught the carrier-wave. And then music picked up mysteriously and carried across meadow, stream, hill, and distilled through an ultra-sensitive mechanism to my auditory nerve. Music, orchestral music—blare of trumpet, plea of sensuous saxaphone, wistfulness of flute, cry of string instruments, sonorous down-beat of tuba and viol, weird diapason of kettledrum—all convoyed magically across the silent or teeming spaces of a thousand miles, and without even the frail medium of a wire. 'Twas an eerie experience for a novice. I do not wonder that thousands of amateurs have become priests at the altar of such mystery, confessors at its wicket. Simple, perhaps, as

I suppose all great marvels are, once they are apprehended; but incredibly amazing—and *hinting*. Is it fulfillment, or prophecy, or merely intimation? Telephone; then wireless telegraphy; now radio-phone. What next? Bold must be he, bolder than the adventurous ones who are literally "sending their souls through the invisible," nay, brazen and purblind he that dares put limits to human daring and achievement. Almost literally have the *Arabian Nights* been surpassed by reality. Those ancient dreamers could not even prefigure the actualities of the modern day. Aladdin's magical possession, held in precarious tenure, would be paltry substitute for the genii's lamp with which such wizards of industry as Crookes, Curie, Edison, Marconi, Burbank, and Dr. Flexner have rubbed their marvels into being. Jack's famous beanstalk-exploit pales by any fair comparison with the scaling of the Milky Way by Herschel and Flammarion. Who wants seven-league boots to travel in when he can employ submarine or airship? Well might the ancient alchemists sigh, "Let me *dream again*"; for we have seen base metals turned to gold; and have added, for good measure of surprise, diamonds manufactured from carbon under inconceivable pressure, and pearls from herring scales.

Next? Who dares affirm or deny? The conquest of gravitation, perhaps. Prophets of progress are naming *that* as the next wonder of the modern world. By aid of a canny device, worn as a belt, for example, and by the touching of a switch, one may be able to soar across stream or muddy thoroughfare as easily as a bird flies, and without fear of an untoward alighting. We have come so far on the road of exploration and conquest that it seems unwise to use the word "impossible." Notwithstanding its terrors and furies, the sea is actually safer for passengers than land-travel is. To a degree unimagined a generation ago we have seen the air mastered. With a bit of glass or rubber one may defy the lightning. Why not gravitation next?

And then the sting out of death? "We cry aloud," mourned Ingersoll at the graveside of his brother, "and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry." But Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Conan Doyle dispute such melancholy findings. They are not triflers with heartache and despair. At the least they are serious men. In their respective provinces they are skilled men. Knighthood was no empty compliment to either. And they insist with utmost gravity that the calls they have caught from beyond are not mere echoes of earth's stricken cries.

For my part I do not know. I do not scoff. I do not vaunt. I dream—and "want to know." And I grant the essential dignity of the quest and the sincerity of the findings.

> "If a dear voice that was to many dear,
> And failed and faltered but the other day"—

if such a voice can record itself for a hundred years, on a film of metal or rubber, and can reach across continents and oceans with its haunting intonations, I do not see why a few spadefuls of earth or a few fathoms of water should still the voice itself. Personality disembodied is scarcely more mysterious or inexplicable than personality bodied. At least my "newsy" can count upon me as regular customer if his strident call brings fresh tidings of the quest of the ages.

"Wuxtry! Wux-try! All about the ———!" Flood, fire, football, riot, homicide, wreck: Ah, laddie, how small difference to you! Any kind of news! You merely carry it and hawk it at the top of your voice. Good tidings or bad, joy or heartbreak, peace or strife, what concern of yours, so you sell papers? One of a vast fraternity, with most of whose members you would disclaim ties—all peddling news.

Hutchinson, in *The Happy Warrior*, describes a London newsboy crying a particular "extra"

which drove a sword through a woman's soul. She was passenger on a crowded bus. And he was a mere vendor of the day's major events. He was as impartial as frost. Moreover, fact would still have been fact had he subdued his voice out of respect to the dead and to the woman on the bus. For some reason his insistent shrilling "got by." Some deep within her answered to deep without. She bought the paper—and swooned—and nearly passed out through the wicket gate that swings but one way. For the "extra" announced the death of the father of her unborn child. And the anonymous vendor never knew the havoc that he wrought that day. He neither intended nor realized it. By so much, then, I acquit him of cruelty. He might have been first to offer aid to the woman whom his news-shaft had slain in heart. But of a herd of unlicensed and uncredentialed prototypes, it is hard to think so indulgently.

Whenever the village gossip, in Griffith's "Way Down East," appeared with her hatchet face, her absurd hat, and her nervous step, the orchestra dropped off into a jerky, spiteful aria. By the clever tick-tack of the tune you knew that a piteous tale was spreading on human feet. Thrice venomous industry, and so tragically common! Would God there were

some such aria to start up, automatically, at the scandal-monger's approach, as a burglar-alarm when door or window is opened! I can understand the "newsy." As a famous Tammany chieftain once confessed, he is "in business for his own pocket all the time." I can understand both thief and hangman. I can half understand the informer who sells for a consideration his blighting wares. But the unrecompensed assassin of a good name, I cannot begin to understand, except upon the thesis Mr. Beecher once employed as explaining certain self-advertised philanthropists. He said that "if the theory of evolution is true, some people must be descended from the hen. They never do a good thing but they cackle immensely." On that theory both carrion-hawk and vulture may claim a large human progeny who ply their trade gratuitously.

Even though an uncomplimentary story be true, why make news of it? To paraphrase a familiar couplet:

> "It may be true, but do you wish it false?
> Has it your vote to be so if it can?"

Is the world not full enough of aches and smarts? Is anything gained by adding to the sum of misery? Not once in a thousand times is there justification for repeating a slur or a

black inference. For my part, I'd rather believe, concerning unworthy folks, a thousand unwarranted, good attributes than to credit one of them unjustly with a single base impulse or behavior. Part of the sting of Mark Antony's assertion that "the evil that men do lives after them" must be found in man's unwillingness to let a bad act stay buried. If good news traveled as far and fast as bad, what an incredibly sweeter world would this be! And if we would be as prompt to impute praise as blame!

Concerning a friend recently lost to me from earth, was made this comment: "I never heard him pass an unkind judgment upon anyone." He was not blind. He was not deaf. He was not dense. He was merely kind. He would neither listen to nor repeat a harsh comment. If it became necessary for him to take cognizance of a disreputable act, he invariably suggested that "maybe we have not all the facts." Nor would he attempt to assemble them. He steadfastly clung to his beautiful reserve, believed in the better selves of people, lifted no eyebrows of suspicion, and carried in his face a luminance that made it hard for the transgressor to play an ignoble part. If that is not Christlikeness, I must have misread the Gospels. "Be pitiful," wrote Ian Maclaren, in an autograph album, on his

last visit to the States, "for you do not know what the other man is bearing." Or, as a lovely French proverb has it, "To understand all is to forgive all." Not quite *all*, perhaps. "That way lies madness." But to drown in a sea of compassion all sparks of vindictiveness; to give wings to no hurtful rumor; to cut off the defaming story even though you may not be permitted to cut out the gossiping tongue is prestige enough for the ages. Honor to the saviour of a life from fire or wave, honor and Carnegie medal perhaps; but to him who helps to rescue the best name of a man, "Citation for Distinguished Bravery."

I have always been glad that a certain magazine, which throve by exploiting the frailties and besmirching the reputation of men and women, disappeared from the newsstands. I should be proud to believe that the nefariousness of its trade forced it out of business. A big world is not big enough for such commerce. Nor is it broad enough to offer accredited standing room for individual purveyors of the same sort of poison. Life is short enough at best. Too short for the fulfilling of its rosiest dreams. Too short for the completing of its most venturesome tasks. Too short for the play of friendship and affection. And immeasurably too short to permit the

wasting of any of its minutes making more arduous the upward path of any pilgrim. One day, according to a pretty legend, the Friend of Sinners paused where a street throng were gathered about the dead body of a dog. None to say a good word for the beast—none but Jesus. All that the others could recall was discreditable. One remembered the snarl, another the evil temper, another the treachery. They fairly chorused the dog's shortcomings. Hated in life and hateful in death. Then silence fell. And when it broke, a Man was saying: "Oh, what beautiful teeth he had." Apocryphal though the story is, it might have been true. It is like *that Man* who gave himself to the redemption of names from their squalor and shame. From his lips, to the hurt of others, no vagrant rumor ever passed. Champion he of the *rights* of the broken and defamed. And the Guild of His Pity is not yet complete.

Here, boy, I'll buy your paper, even though I may omit to read its overspiced news. There may be a dependent mother to support, or sick in the house. There will be shoes to buy, and bread. You've a living to make, though it were not to my liking. In a strident fashion you "serve the present age." But for such as have only an idle story to spread, I've no time, ear, or stomach. Stand back!

VIII

TO OR FROM

MERELY a matter of prepositions—and simple ones at that. Nothing new or convulsive or *outré* about them. The very same we learned rules for in our elementary grammars. To or from—here I've been using the words ever since I began building sentences, and never once suspected in them any quality of start and surprise. As well attempt to write an oration on the conjunction "and"; or to build an epic about the indefinite article. Precisely: and why not? Isn't the *Iliad* an heroic amplification, with concomitants more or less variable, of the pronoun "she"? And what is the *Odyssey* but an Homeric lengthening of the shadow of the small word "he"? Life is lived mostly in monosyllables. Only in books are great issues spelled out in sesquipedalian measures. Ordinary folks do not make the sort of grandiloquent speeches attributed to them by their biographers or by so-called historical novelists. Rather do they groan or sigh or hiss out their souls in short-metred phrases. Heaven and hell, together

with all the intermediate spaces, are expressed or implied in the tiny words "yes" and "no."

For one reason among many, this is why I enjoyed so keenly Hutchinson's volume, *If Winter Comes.* It is consummately, almost appallingly, natural. Nothing fixed up or poseful about it. It conceals its own rare art. Mark and Mabel, Nona and the Rev. Mr. Boom Bagshaw, talk just as their counterparts do on the street or at supper. No effort to provide copy for a book; no pretense of literary achievement—no more than when we say "Good-morning," or give a restaurant order, or buy a newspaper. Usually, I think we succeed in saying *least,* or being least self-revelatory, when we reach and strain for adjectives, or dress up sentences as when one sits for a portrait. In the tense, seething kinetic world of everyday the simple stuff of speech carries best the freight of hopes and fears, of joy and anguish. The really great words of language are its small ones. Reduced to its lowest terms, *Thanatopsis* is the light of Bryant's soul broken in the prism of one small, chilly monosyllable. All of the elder Hawthorne is a frank, stabbing iteration of the blackest word in the dictionary. Dante's *Inferno* is an immortal paraphrase on a combination of four letters. Look again at the

best-known passages of Shakespeare: Hamlet's soliloquy, Antony's oration, Othello's superheated cry of a divided soul. Hardly a word of three syllables; comparatively few longer than one. Like single drops of blood still warm and crimson; like bullets rushing straight to their mark, is the great dramatist's vocabulary. Or the King James version of the Bible. Ponder the phraseology of the Shepherd Psalm, or the parable of the prodigal, or Jesus' matchless prayer for his disciples. Such dignity is there, such verbal restraint, such winnowed speech. Line after line, paragraph upon paragraph, and not a single pedantic word. No wonder that the old version has, for three hundred years, remained a model of chaste English. As if by inspiration, the translators preserved the majestic, awful simplicity of speech of Moses and David, of Paul and Jesus.

The longer I live, the more suspicious I become of a sonorous vocabulary. I have almost wished for a law against words of more than four syllables. The worst thing about language is not that it may *conceal* thought—though that were bad enough. The worst is that it may be used to conceal *lack* of thought. And nothing else will more certainly compass that than a haze of polysyllables. Not long ago I stumbled upon the following verbal curiosity;

got tangled up in it, so to speak—"paradimethylaminobenzoldehyde." Just look at it, sprawled clear across the page as if by superior right, occupying space enough to carry a message of eternal import. From the longitude of it you might fancy it an important affair. On the contrary, it is merely the ponderous name of a laboratory re-agent. If it ever gets out into the street, somebody may adopt it as a hinge to conversation or as platform soporific. Such a word leaves nothing at all to the imagination. It reminds me of an Irishman's reply when asked to read the legend over a Kosher market: "No, I can't *read* it, but if I had me flute, I could *play* it." Heaven knows we have plenty of long words already. I would fine anybody who invents another before the present supply is digested. Some years ago an autopsy upon a famous sword-swallower revealed strange stomach-contents: buttons, coins, penknives, spoons, and what not. Whether his professional diet killed him I cannot say; I merely record the surgeon's findings. And I fancy that an inventory of our vocabulary might yield results equally startling—a huge insoluble mass of words. Fortunate for most of us that we are not called upon to define all the parts of speech we employ. Have it as you will. But for my regular linguistic rations, and as provision for

the best mental hospitality I can offer, give me plenty of plain, nourishing Anglo-Saxon roots, with a moderate seasoning of Greek and Latin derivatives, and perhaps a garnishing of French. 'Tis a verbal diet fit for the gods—and men!

Thus back to the pair of simple prepositions with which I began this essay. "To or from." I have always known they differed, but only recently did I realize the chasm between them. I was watching, as travelers will, the mileposts along a highway. Ten miles *to* W, six miles *to* W, one mile *to* W. All entirely usual and unarresting. But as we passed through the town, and the open road beyond unrolled like a ribbon, I noticed again the mileposts. Two miles *from* W, five miles *from* W. Then I craned my neck for a closer look at the post we were passing. I looked at both sides, as one always should. On one side, "Six miles *from* W": on the obverse, "Six miles *to* W." Were I a playwright, I could build a drama upon the significance of the cleavage between those two small words, "to" and "from." All the difference in the world, all the contrast between dawn and nightfall, whether one is going to meet joy or leaving it behind, marching up to pain or watching it recede. Life, at any moment, is a journey to or from some

city of rosy dreams or some "City of Dreadful Night." Indeed, the case is less simple than that. For the same pilgrim, at the same instant, is both advancing and retreating. And the same city is both Mecca of hope and ashes of disillusion to different pilgrims.

In life is no *status quo*, no place or condition of permanent abode. We arrive; pass through; fare on. Of necessity, if not of choice, we are constantly moving—to or from. Our most substantial dwellings of stone or star-dust are really tents. No sooner do we get them pitched than the command comes to strike them, next morning. No migratory bird has so brief and precarious a tenure as we. Even though it be true that our attainments and buildings abide, we are constantly changing our relation to or our view of them. Among the deeply beautiful traditions brought down into modern life by orthodox Jews is that of the exodus. The residence of each Hebrew who keeps the faith is deliberately left incomplete. Be it of palatial proportions and equipment, still in some detail it remains unfinished. An unmitered molding, an unhung door, an unpolished wainscot reminds the occupant that he is tenant merely; that, in classic phrase, he has "no continuing city." His *name* means that—Hebrew, emigrant, come-across, sojourner. In the par-

lance of the railway we speak of "terminal cities," like Chicago with its thirty-odd trunk lines focusing there. But in life are no terminal cities. Every highway leads through and beyond, always on and on. Traveling days are not done until we reach the margin of the Cold River. And who shall dare say that the journey ends there? What reaches of clear water, what movement unwearied, unharassed and set to increasing joy, may lie beyond the meeting of our "Pilot face to face when we have crossed the bar," who can guess or deny?

In my school days we debated whether the pleasures of realization equal those of anticipation. We went at the subject ardently, either by choice or assignment—I think it made small difference which. Even in those far-off, immature days I am certain we doubted the value of our findings; carried away a real sense of secret dismay, even when our side had won the contest. And I can recall the teacher's smile. As well decide the question by length of argument, or vociferousness, or vote of the class. For, as the teacher's indulgent smile implied, and as life since has taught us, the question never is settled for any two pilgrims, or for any single pilgrim on two successive days. Realization is not a static condition: it is itself transition. No sooner do we reach a joy than

we are beyond it, looking back upon it: revaluating it perhaps; discounting it possibly. The difficulty is that we cannot settle down with anything attained or achieved. We look forward to Thanksgiving dinner, or love's fruition, or a home of our own, or a coveted honor, or a finished task. Perhaps—? But we cannot prolong indefinitely a Thanksgiving feast, or protract thrills which by nature are transitory, or sit down with a satisfaction and call it solid. Always, inevitably—and thank God—we are looking forward or back. A vast and all-compelling restlessness is upon us, urging us on or calling us to retrace our steps. Hope and memory play ceaselessly their music in the soul. And our feet instinctively keep time to the inward cadences. To or from. Always one or the other, or both at once. Life's most poignant sweetness and its cruellest pang are compassed by those two small words —to or from.

Across the spaces of the intervening years drifts the lament of my childhood: "Christmas comes but once a year." *My* lament, not my elders. They said it with an ill-concealed note of relief, as if they almost wished that Christmas need not come at all. Once my father told me that if the festival came twice a year, he would be a bankrupt and my mother a nervous

wreck. But, even for a boy, the infrequency of Yuletide was not the worst thing about it: the worst was that, when it came, it lasted less than twenty-four hours. Long before nightfall the average child begins to wonder—though he probably would deny the query—what's the matter with Christmas. Surrounded with toys, surfeited with edibles, and the domestic decalogue relaxed for a day, still he tastes ashes. Somehow the climax of a twelve-month is not all that he had dreamed and prayed. Arriving, he finds it past—or still ahead. Pilgrim he of the long road called life, and taking his first lesson in pilgrimhood. By and by, if he grows up in soul, he will learn that we always jeopardize his freest song when we capture a songbird. Only for a moment is he in the city of dream—or dread. Next minute 'tis behind—or ahead. Christmas, to the child, is like other beautiful things to be encountered on his journey, however long. With respect to *all* of them he is sojourner merely.

Admit it with joy or dismay, we never completely arrive and stay. I might name a famous American painter who never could persuade himself, nor be persuaded, that on any of his canvases had he reached the destination of his genius: nothing finished to his satisfaction. Always a fresh touch to be added, and then

another. Perhaps all great artists are so. Perhaps it is for the mediocre workman only that deed matches dream. At any rate, it was next to impossible to win sight of his pictures; and still more difficult to buy one. Set on easels or stacked against the walls of his cottage, for him they were incomplete; haunting invitations to achievement, prophecies more than performances. Only after his caressing hand had been stilled did the rare children of his brush escape into public view. Of Mozart, as I recall, says an admirer, "It is not his genius that surprises me, it is his beelike industry, his inflexibility toward himself." Woe betide any man who overtakes his ideal! In another sense, perhaps, than Browning intended, "Success is naught, endeavor's all." By the way, how I should have liked a peep into Browning's wastebasket. I should like to see the lines he flung aside while he was building his "Rabbi Ben Ezra" or his "Saul." I wonder if any real maker of literature ever was content with his product. Sensitive to criticism likely; ready to fight for the right of his mental progeny to live, as a mother for the child of whom, secretly, she is least proud. Darwin waited twenty years before giving to the world his *Origin of Species*. Imagine the stresses, the forward strainings, the huge

disgusts of Macaulay, self-immured in his study, with bread and a pitcher of water, rewriting twenty times some of his vivid pages. Heine, in his garret, broken, raging against the fates, still lashed himself on. The autobiography of Thomas A. Edison would be a record of unresting and incessant urge. This is the real wizardry of Menlo Park, that each fresh invention paves the way to a greater. For all great artists, in pigments, in melody, in language, in laboratory, ever the forward thrust. So many miles of hard travel *to* the perfecting of their craft—and never reaching it.

That way lies the lure of all progress. Pity the man who must look back for his achievements. As in the case of Herkomer. He had done good work but his hands had lost their cunning. Day after day he wrought fretfully in his old studio; night after night he flung down his tools with a cry of utter futility: "Oh, I cannot carve as once I did." Only as his son, torn by the old man's grief, sought to do for him surreptitiously, at night, what the other had failed to do during the day, came the smile back into the father's eyes. Pretty, harmless deceit which, nevertheless, left the facts as they were. Not *to* but *from*. Paradise lost because past. Memory hurts more than it comforts when hope is dead.

But my small prepositions supply the key and zest to all fine human service. Ambition is not static but dynamic; cumulative rather than fixed. According to tradition, Alexander's heart broke when he could glimpse no more worlds to conquer. Someone describes the eyes of Napoleon on Saint Helena, as "sunk in great wells of sorrow." The acclaim, the leaping dream, the pulse of victory were behind. The possibility, even, of Jena ahead, or Austerlitz, would have set him afire. But, the story written, nothing remained save to die. That porphyry catafalque beneath the dome of Les Invalides is not more truly the tomb of a body than the mortuary memorial of a slain spirit. Napoleon died when they killed his dream. Who shall guess the historic difference if John Wilkes Booth's bullet had missed its mark? Lincoln was essentially too great to mistake an eventuation for a consummation. The signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, the surrender at Appomattox Court House were not finalities: they were registries of progress, roadside-markers, telling distance and direction. To gain the heart of a conquered foe would have meant more to Lincoln than to bring that foe to his knees; to heal the wounds of war than to win by inflicting them. But just as the Ship of State

had got its victory of arms we lost the pilot. So with any of the famous turning points of history; Marathon, Tours, the signing of Magna Charta, Yorktown, Waterloo, Manila Bay—or the Marne. These were merely "turning points" from which the course leads forever on. Armistice Day, celebrated again, and with heightened solemnity, was a sharp reminder that the greater problems remained when the victory of arms had been won. In a way, it was easier to put two millions of American lads in France than to lay, in the shell-torn earth, foundations of a lasting peace. Reduction of armament, splendid as is such achievement, is but a milestone on the long road from the kingdom of force to the kingdom of brotherhood.

Seldom, moreover, shall the protagonist in any form of service reach the end of his own trail. Hercules completed his ten labors. Say that he did his bit—all of it. Still, his full duty failed to exhaust the list of needed earth betterments. Cromwell was merely one in a long and glorious line. After Wilberforce must come Shaftesbury, Maurice, Gladstone, Lloyd George, and what more. New torch-bearers must snatch the flame and bear it forward. David lacking a Solomon to *build* the Temple for him; Livingstone with no Stanley

caught by the same passion, Frances Willard and no successor; Roosevelt leaving his great dream to no youths of vision, were shorn of half their glory. History is a serial. From despotism to feudalism—splendid; but not the end of the road. From feudalism to representative government—and still the road leading on. Then democracy in church and state—and more vistas. Now the democratization of industry, with many back-sets and travails—and the guideposts indicating vast distances yet. Who shall even guess the Elysian fields at the end of the road?

Nor is the case different with reach of soul. Always, "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, else what's a heaven for?" For the urgent spirit no complacent occupancies, no long tenure of vantage gained. The goal becomes a point of departure. Said Fra Elbertus: "Our chief business in life is not to get ahead of others but to get ahead of ourselves." For such a lightning-like flash of truth I forgive him most of the murky, scurrilous things he said. The only way to keep life piquant and zestful is to raise its grade continually. "When you can do it, you lose interest," applies to the athletics of the soul. A man must forever tease himself forward by glimpses of new heights. "Endeavor to be good, and better

still, and best," or, as the same prophet of virility phrases the matter in still more pungent lines, "All the play, all the stretch, all the might, out of me, out of me!" Through the haze of the centuries, against the background of an empire at its zenith, stands one of the heroic figures of all time. Despite the shafts that have been flung at his theology, he still is all man. For resourcefulness, for intrepidity, for unflinching idealism, for passionate enterprise on behalf of others, for sublimity of self-surrender, for unwhining devotion to his cause, he can be matched perhaps once in a thousand years. And here is his working creed: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, reaching forth unto those things which are before." Most men, with half his record, would have spent the remainder of life calling attention to their attainments. But, he said, near the end of his journey, "Not as though I had already attained." No resting on laurels won, great as they were. No stand-patism with his own rate of progress, though he moved like a whirlwind. Just an inflexible face-front: to use his own words, "from glory to glory."

Such a spirit has no time to coddle its own hurts. I think there are few more subtle

temptations than the temptation to sit down with a grief or a catastrophe, as if we had *arrived.* I have seen my friends move into their Lodge of Sorrow, with all their furniture, and shut the door, and draw the somber curtains—to stay. Anyone who has known great grief can understand. Life seems to have stopped. "The pitcher is broken at the fountain." But grief is not the end, more than joy is. The Lodge of Sorrow is only a lodge. The road to finer ministry and richer usefulness runs past the door. Even with treachery's wound in the back, one must go on. "Didn't you bury your little daughter recently?" asked a neighbor of a woman who had gone out into the sunshine with her surviving children. "Yes," came the reply, as the inward wound bled afresh; "yes, I did bury my little girl, last week, but I did not think I had any right to bury my other children alive." That's the overtone of a victorious spirit. Out of the darkness into the day—and on.

And then this. Why assume that a tombstone is the last road-sign on the journey? Even Robert G. Ingersoll, at his brother's open grave, thought he could almost read, on the farther side of the last post of an earth-pilgrimage—"to" life immortal. That no traveler returns is far from final argument

against the road ahead. 'Tis many years since I last saw some of my classmates 'neath the elms. Nor have I heard directly from them. But I do not assume that they have laid down their tools and ceased loving, besides. Now and again stray rumor reaches me that they still are much alive and increasingly useful. On the other side of the world, perhaps, but still "carrying on." I know the analogy goes lame. It does for me. I want to *know*—not guess. But the so-called "intimations of immortality" are more than intimations, they are implications. The real logic of life is life. "Winter is on my head," said Victor Hugo at eighty, "but spring is in my heart." Shall nightingale and bullfinch sing their full song, and man be denied chance to let out all his pent music? On the last, visible milepost of the journey is a Hand, strong, gentle, nail-pierced, pointing on. Nay, the divinest Prophet of the Long Road, star-eyed, all pitiful, unafraid, left this message: "I go to prepare . . . for you."

IX

BEGINNERS' LUCK

I HAD it, myself, the first time I played golf. At least, they *said* I had it. Accused me of it, so to speak, as of carrying a concealed weapon or of harboring typhoid germs. Sentenced me for it, as when the court says, "Thirty days at hard labor," or the physician looks wise and decrees six weeks in bed. Probably I *did* have it, as charged—I mean, "beginners' luck." Yet I do not see how I could avoid it. And, in the circumstances, I wish I might have been permitted to *have* it, without being *told.* Matters have reached a dismal pass. Everything is being diagnosed and classified and generalized, so that all poetry, all mysterious thrill are destroyed. The scientific explainer is abroad in the land. Nowadays a man cannot even have a pain in his back or stiffness of a joint and get away with it as a sort of inscrutable providence. It has to be charged up to his teeth or tonsils. If he is blessed with a good disposition, no personal credit is allowed him for possessing or using it. If he displays criminal instincts, malnutrition may be the

cause, or some abnormality in his phrenological chart. Even a great dream or a transforming passion for humanity has to be pathologically explained. Carlyle's organ-toned plaint with his age is said to have been the result of duodenal catarrh; and Paul's vision on the Damascus Road due to "a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex." One cannot even die and carry his secret with him: somebody may suggest an autopsy. And Freud insists upon reducing religious conviction and ecstasy to terms decidedly unflattering. Nowadays nothing is left "up in the air" except clouds and stars—and they are explained.

So with my first exploit on the golf-links. Had I paused to consider, I might have realized it would be wrung dry of joy. My opponent was a veteran at the game, whereas I knew not the distinction between "driver" and "kleek." Of "form" I had none. The manner of my initial performance, that lovely afternoon in the hills of Connecticut, would have made a caddie weep for the traditions of the game. I was a sorry spectacle with a golf-club, doubtless. Yet I did not *realize* it. And I made nine holes with all possible *aplomb*, easily defeated my instructor (which may not be saying much), and stalked off the course in full pride of victory. And then? Well, my

pride was soon dashed. For they dismissed my success as a plain case of "beginners' luck."

I suppose the commentators were right, though I wish they might have granted my happiness a trifle longer lease of life. Next day's experience on the same links and with the same opponent would have brought me to my senses. Nor has any subsequent dalliance with the furtive golf-ball caused me to crave spectators. I had struck twelve in my maiden effort, forgetting that, next after twelve, comes one, both in clocks and in life. Next day I carried a full line of careful instructions with respect to "stroke" and "form," particularly the latter. I was told how to plant my feet, how to poise the club, and how to complete the swing with my stick high in the air. I obeyed—and dug up turf enough to sod a city dooryard. Naturally, my suspicions began to grow, as when a shop-apprentice's mates send him on a fool's errand. I was waxing ill-tempered, too. But they told me not to bother about hitting the ball until after I had acquired the proper "form." So, having no greater wisdom than my teachers, I kept on getting "form" and missing the ball until I decided for some other kind of sport.

"Beginners' *luck*." I do not like the word. What the novice brings with him to his first

venture in any game—be it golf or art, love or life—is not "luck" at all. It is the asset of naturalness. For the nonce he is himself, the realest thing he ever will be. Neither prepossessions, fear of defeat, nor the technique of the enterprise troubles him yet. With full assurance of faith and the strength of an undivided mind he goes out to win. At least he will enjoy the adventure. His the ebullient, unspoiled spirit of the child, capable of extracting from the undertaking itself as much felicity as the veteran investor draws from ten per cent. And to keep alive that ardent mood; to be always the *amateur* in the true sense of the word; to carry over into the careful discipline and technical masteries of later days the unembarrassed, happy venturesomeness of the beginner is itself success.

Illustrations start up anywhere, as spring flowers under a warm sun. You may hear a well-trained athlete described as "stale"—by which expressive term the initiate mean certain pathological matters. They mean that the contestant is overtrained, fined down too far. In the process of qualifying for honors, he has lost snap and verve. Precisely. He is defeated mentally days before he meets his public Waterloo. He has gone through the motions too oft. Familiarity has bred a sort

of apathy, if not contempt. He knows the rules of the game so well that they no longer grip him. He has become mechanical—the worst calamity for a human being, whether in the presence of art or sport or the building of manhood. He has dropped the swift, leaping passion of his early devotement. In other words, the *man* has died in the *professional.*

A friend of mine decided to try his hand at painting. For many years he had been an ardent lover of pictures. He was owner of a rare collection of modern masters—Mauve, Corot, Maris, Israels, Boerbohm, Millet. But now he was to try his own brush on canvas. He bought an outfit of pigments and other tools of the craft. And, at first, without teacher or technique, wanting obsessions or fear of critics, but with a leaping love of the thing, he flung himself into his new avocation. I watched the light play across his face as he told me. Like that other who, looking toward heights he never would scale, yet thrilling with his sense of kinship with immortal aspirants, he cried exultantly, "I also am an artist." He did some rather extraordinary work for a belated knight of the brush, did my friend. And, paradoxical as it may seem, his first canvases were his best, both in charm and in strength. They had a quality of natural-

ness which too often flies out of the window when the teacher comes in by the door. I am not saying that instruction spoiled him; only that, while he was learning the rules of his art, he lost the game.

Similarly, I recall the tragedy of a voice. It was a singularly beautiful voice; hesitant, perhaps, like the first notes of a finch, yet very sure. It had a lovely wistfulness, an innocent, searching sweetness that went straight to the heart. It was a child-voice to which laws of breathing and tone-placement were foreign. What a promise of power when the lassie should be woman-grown! So they sent her away to be trained. And when she came back she brought chiefly a double-quaver, shrillness, affectation. All native charm had gone. What would have happened, I wonder, if Lind and Parepa Rosa, Schumann-Heink and Melba had fallen into such despoiling hands? The world is overstocked with graduates in painting and music, in literature and theology who have so utterly lost ardor that, were their mistress a flesh-and-blood woman instead of a Muse, she would scarcely welcome their blandishments.

I am not decrying the need and value of technical rules; I am merely noting that any rules may be overworked. As the French proverb

has it, "He makes no mistakes, and he makes nothing else." The more gifted the artist the more flagrant often his violence to established canons of his craft. To a critic who ventured to assure Turner that she never had seen sunsets such as he painted, he replied, "Don't you wish you could?" Nobody else has imaged, on canvas, a tree as Corot did; or sketched, as Israels for his beloved Holland, "the short and simple annals of the poor"; or drawn from a palette such color-tones as Titian and Rubens used. The fame of Winslow Homer and Sartain shall not be found in their resemblances to, but in their divergence from, their so-called masters. "That which each can do best only his Maker can teach him." A gift, as we call it, is precisely that—no less. It is by no means a laborious acquisition, though it may be cultivated to almost incredible proportions. It is a flare of the infinite in the fleeting life of the human. It is born with or into the individual, as native as the breath he draws. And it comes to expression, as a bird-song does, under adequate stimuli. Whoso *has* it is not the *product* but the *maker* of a school.

MacDowell's compositions were, at first, an annoyance to the critics. They could not seem to classify him. "Whom is he like?" they asked, cynically. And, not finding ready

answer, they provided no place for him in their Valhalla. And then the unlooked for happened again, so that the unticketed composer became a sort of vogue, with MacDowell Clubs, in musical centers, to extend his fame. Better a Walt Whitman with all his emotional extravagance and technical outlawry than the devotee of "prunes and prisms" whose main concern is to be the accredited pupil of a famous master. In all art as truly as in human relationships, are the familiar lines valid:

> "To thine own self be true;
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."

As concerning men of letters, there's a tradition that novelist or poet strikes twelve but once, and, that frequently, in his early work. I should not care to defend it as a *thesis*, with the critics ready to rend me. Let it stand as a *tradition*, rather, streaked with elements of truth as any other tradition. Burns never did anything finer than his "Mary in Heaven" or "To a Field Mouse," "The Cotter's Saturday Night" or "Highland Mary." Ask a thousand admirers of Thackeray, at random, and I believe that *Vanity Fair*, his earliest big effort, would get a majority vote. George Eliot never surpassed *Adam Bede*, even by the time she reached *Daniel Deronda*.

Bryant seems to have put into *Thanatopsis* the very cream of himself. De Morgan's *Joseph Vance*, his first venture, written at fifty, caught him at noon and made his fame. Owen Wister's *The Virginian* had no successor for spontaneity and a certain fresh skill. Margaret Deland's later and more pretentious volumes are little else than variations upon the *Old Chester Tales*. When she had drawn the portrait of Doctor Lavendar she had shot her bolt.

Whether or not we accept George Eliot's explanation, in her *Notes*, that the publishers and a greedy public are to blame, hallooing for fresh supplies, as of calico, it is apparent enough that even a great writer may grow stale in the employment of his gift. Into a first maximum effort there goes an abandon, a pent strength, a fire that may be sadly wanting later. Nothing else substitutes for fire—not even finish. Fire, the native flame of a soul, may carry an author far, despite defects of poise and scholarship. But finish, lacking the Promethean fire, leads nowhere except to mediocrity. If it may be said that Scott's *Lady of the Lake* and *Count Robert of Paris* held the grade of his *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Guy Mannering*, make sure that he never banked the fires even during the agonies of physical torment and bankruptcy. Coleridge,

on the other hand, "the most myriad-minded man since Shakespeare," lost the passion of his task many years before he ceased writing; smothered it in pillows of ease.

Is not here the perennial problem of student life, to carry forward, into senior year, the alertness and piquancy of spirit which a normal student brings to college with him? Asked to name her dearest wish, a brilliant Scot replied, "I wish, for me, that life may never lose its halo." Life, anywhere, wanting a halo over its tasks and experiences, is a drab, desolate thing. But particularly is this true of college years. Freshness is not the worst fault an entrant brings to college with him. Staleness is immeasurably more perilous. The most brilliant man in my class "lost the halo," fell *blasé*, ceased to yearn forward. Life was done; and the coroner's jury merely added an epitaph. Over every new textbook, over each term in the laboratory ought to hang a sort of aura. I do not ask how it *came* there; merely if the student will *keep* it there; if, after he has crossed the *Pons Asinorum*, he will find the country beyond just as enticing; if he can close a book with the spirit he gave to the opening of it. Not to lose the joy of the beginner is more significant than a diploma, *Magna cum laude*.

To the same buoyant beginners' zest are we indebted for a host of shining achievements in the fields of industry and statecraft. Disraeli declared that "almost everything . . . great has been done by youth." Alexander, rearranging national boundaries before he reached thirty years; Gustavus Adolphus, completing his herculean labors and life itself at thirty-eight; Cortez not past thirty when he opened up Mexico; Pascal, just out of his teens, laying an impress on the world's thought for centuries to come; Raphael done with brush and earth at thirty-seven, are examples from a list almost incredibly long and brilliant. I quote from it, not for the sake of overaccenting youth measured in "figures on a dial," but as illustrating the value of the *spirit* of youth. The weakness of Osler's famous dictum is that his test was of the calendar rather than of the soul. A man may be old at thirty, as Byron, or youthful at fourscore, as Depew, according as he plays the game. Old men to dream dreams, but young men to see visions in sticks and stones, in leaf and ocean. To the credit of the actually young, or to those eager spirits who decline to "take in sail," even when life's afternoon breezes grow heavy, be all epochal inventions. Watt with his engine, Howe with his sewing machine, Field

with his first Atlantic cable, Bell with his telephone, Seibold with his perfected arc-lamp, Marconi with his wireless, were "at the flood" of life. George Westinghouse made his immense contribution to the safety of railroad travel while still a youth. Burbank blazed his splendid trail as a young man. Dr. Carrel, trammeled by the characteristic prudences of an added twenty years, might have missed the Nobel prize.

Speaking with respect approaching reverence, the Constitution of the United States is a startling instance of "beginners' luck." Its framers were not the Solons of the ages. They were comparatively young in years, and younger still in the arts and intrigues of Old-World statecraft. Their directness and truculence were well-nigh terrifying. Granting their clean breed and moral brawn, their stern sanity and fierce convictions, they were playing a game that experts might have shrunk from entering. In a sense, they had the hardihood to match their brains against the seasoned findings of the centuries. Colossal daring! Amazing enterprise! Yet, somehow, from the soil of a new continent, from the smoke of receding conflict, from rebirths of democratic feeling, they gathered the unapologetic air of eternal youth and breathed it into an instru-

ment seriously described as the most inspired ever penned, next to the Bible. It may be doubted if the world realizes its debt to that little group of protesting colonists who appended their names to their work.

Whether later Amendments grade up to the document itself may not be for me to affirm. But, at least, I object to hearing the Eighteenth Amendment characterized as a specimen of postwar hysteria. The constitution itself was written while hearts still glowed with the fires of revolution and struggle. Four amendments followed the Civil War, while wounds still bled. Strange, indeed, if our share in the Armageddon of the ages left no trace in our national Charter. And stranger still if the additions were made in cold blood. For my part, I am willing to leave to the spirit of eternal youth, reborn in every age, rather than to cold casuists and elder statesmen whose chief asset is their caution, such interpretations and alterations as the Constitution may require to keep it alive and puissant.

By a sort of beginners' luck we gain most of our friends. I am familiar with Quarle's wise counsel: "Deliberate before thou consecrate a friend; and when thy impartial judgment concludes him worthy of thy bosom—!" As if anything so cold as an "impartial judg-

ment" could cut a figure in the winning of friends. By the time you have arrived at that sort of determination you may decide also that you can do without the candidate. To select a friend as one chooses a jackknife or an automobile—or as some pick their mates—by a calm eliminative process, is a sort of profanation. Indeed, it may be doubted if even such material possessions as knives and automobiles can be chosen impartially. The choicest friendships, like poets, are *born*, not *made*. They walk into our lives in unguarded moments, unannounced as life assets, uncredentialed save by the glow in a face or the warmth of a hand. Friends may die or prove unfaithful, but these are contingencies against which the most "impartial judgment" never can guarantee, more than in so-called "gilt-edged investments." Friends come as dawn does, as the wind, as a great love. One of the dearest comrades a man ever called "friend" came to me at a famous lunch-counter in old New York. We jostled elbows—my fault, no doubt—and he turned with a luminous smile that I learned to love; and, as I have always believed, with a naughty word on his tongue. We had mutual friends, it appeared. We finished the hurried meal together, and walked out upon Broadway, enriched for aye, at least

as to *my* portion in the sacrament of the heart. God has blessed me singularly with friends; yet I cannot recall one of them as "deliberately consecrated."

All the world loves a lover, loves him for the same reason a woman loves him—for his blindness, if you please. Let all the usual strictures against the "blind god" be warranted by fact. Then admit that his blindness is safer guide than the counsels of the wise and prudent in affairs of the heart. The kingdom of love, like the kingdom of heaven, "suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Poor John Alden, hat in hand, embarrassed and stammering, trying to repeat for his captain certain philandering phrases women are supposed to enjoy, is delicious comedy. Unless Priscilla had more directness than he, the romance were spoiled. Let him drop his hat and take Priscilla in his arms, man-fashion! Even-pulsed commentators have made merry over Romeo's ardent phrases:

"Two of the fairest stars in all the heavens,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
. . . . . .
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheeks would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp: her eye in heaven
Would through the airy regions stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night."

"Gammon and spinach," doubtless, as the critics assert. Yet I warrant that Juliet failed to think so. Nor would any other normal woman—the hyperbole being addressed to *her*. Or, in case she did *orally* object; *in heart* she would enjoy such "gammon and spinach" far better than the stern sanities and meticulated decorums of a less venturesome lover. A friend whose daughter is just beginning to be discovered by the other sex says that the winning suitor, at present, is a lad who scaled a telephone pole nearest milady's window, as means of salutation. Of course. Being a callow swain, and uninstructed in the game of hearts, he had hit, by instinct, upon the time-honored way of a man with a maid. Sir Knight must scale a trellis or break a lance or dive for a lost trinket. So shall he wear his lady's flower, as against Crœsus who waits for the blossom to drop into his lap, or Beau Brummell who wonders if the blossom will match his scarf. Marion Crawford once said that the best women rarely marry their equals. Fortunate for the men if not for the women. There is in all good women a protective, maternal instinct which jumps to those who need it most. Moreover, even the best women, spite of feminist doctrines, still like to be taken by storm. In either case the advantage seems to

fall to the fools who rush in where angels would go softly.

My caption leads *wide* and *far*. And it finds crowning illustration in the topmost realm—religion. Ours is not an irreligious age. It is a confused age. It is a time of maze and unsettling. Following the Freudian clue concerning the peril of suppressed instincts, even the flippancies and carnalities of the day may be part penalty for beating back the highest quest of the soul.

> "So many gods, so many creeds,
> So many paths that wind and wind."

Yet man cannot altogether deny the accent of the mother-tongue of religion. One day, while his companions were discussing learnedly the various routes to the City Celestial, Jesus "took a little child, and set him in the midst, and said, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter." "*As a little child.*" Does that imply meekness, docility, modesty, reserve? Only by violation of the simile. Precious eagerness, faith wide-eyed and unashamed, confidence prompt and unhesitant—these are the traits of the normal child. Healthy-minded, he takes for granted everything he needs. If 'tis the moon he desires for a plaything, he expects it, forthwith, physics and astronomy to the

contrary. And Jesus declared that the way into the kingdom of heavenlies is the *child's* way. So that the *savant* who, in his scholarship, has missed the way; the casuist who has lost it in the web of his analysis; the Pharisee who has forfeited it through morbid self-consciousness; the hag-ridden prodigal who has dropped it in the black morass of remorse, may find it again, with joy, as a supreme piece of "beginners' luck."

X

FACTORY SITES

PLAINLY, an invitation to the manufacturer. No harm in that, of course. There must be shops or there would be no shoes, telephones, or frying-pans. And such establishments cannot hang in mid-air. They must preempt land that, otherwise employed, might blush with flowers or rustle with corn-shocks. I've no quarrel to pick with the genius which expresses itself in looms and lathes, in forge and furnace; nor mood to litigate the case as between the world's need of food on the one hand, and, on the other, a stove and utensils with which to prepare the food. One may have his convictions as to which is the primary need: but let that pass. My mental arrest was in the fact that the tract of land commended to the manufacturer was meadow-land. For aught I know to the contrary, it had been part of somebody's farm. Once it had risen in curling, pungent waves at the long stroke of the plowshare. It had echoed back the ring of scythe and flail, or had matured, in its kindly womb, gladdening crops of potato or beet. Bluebells had lifted dainty heads there, or primrose and

buttercup spattered it. Who shall say, and what matter the precise thing he says? All that concerned me was this: that one of the myriad laboratories of God was henceforth to be dedicated to the manufacturer. Where the great Artist had coaxed from the soil, at caress of sun and benison of shower, a thousand flowers, now man was invited to show his skill with lathe and die, amid babel of sound. Every man to his taste, of course. But, for me, the most commonplace thing God grows, as the tassel on ordinary field-corn or the snowdrop pushing its heraldic way skyward in prophecy of spring, outwonders the utmost man yet will build in shop or factory. No aspersion upon anybody; just a bit of incense to burn to God; and an alarm call against exalting things that are cobbled together, be they as perfect as Swiss watches and Hoe printing presses, over things that grow without sound of hammer or squeal of lathe.

I wonder if just there is not the trouble. In a way we rather enjoy bedlam. Noise is a sort of *sine qua non* of applied power. The more noise—indeed, the more kinds of noises—the greater the impression upon us. A soundless automobile if such could be contrived, would leave some owners disappointed. They would miss the *sense* of speed. They enjoy

hearing themselves, and perhaps especially *letting others hear* them go. A good cut-out, wide open, often adds to the driver's pride in his metal steed. The "Iron-Woman" in Margaret Deland's story got solid content out of the moil and roar of her blast furnaces. They increased her feeling of power. And the great stacks, belching grime over a community, clouded not her dreams a shade; rather brightened them. When my friend showed me through his factory he apologized for the almost deafening confusion which made it necessary for him to fairly yell in my ear. He apologized, I say; but I make sure he felt far from apologetic. The scream of his lathes was music to him. They cried big dividends. They were part of the atmosphere of success. I am not certain that he would approve of a silent lathe, could such be had. Did anybody ever employ a carpenter who seemed bent upon making less than maximum noise? If I failed to hear him I should be certain he was loafing or had gone home. "Sound and fury" may signify nothing, but, for most of us, they still are normal concomitant and blazing sign of progress.

Whereas the Great Artificer does his inimitable work in a quiet almost uncanny. The mechanism of a thousand flying worlds makes

less noise than a dollar toy-engine. Who ever heard earth creak on its axis? Or the sun roll up with sound of speed? Or caught an echo of scene-shifting on the stage of a sunset sky? I suppose that a thunderstorm is about the noisiest thing God does. And as matter of fact, the real business of the enterprise, the rapier-like sword play in the clouds, is as silent as death. Did anyone ever *hear* God build an oak or cover a meadow with grain? Ever catch the footfall of him on any of his myriad errands of ministry and redemption? Perhaps this is part of the meaning of the ancient confession: "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself." He hides himself, so to say, is the mysterious silence of his operations. In the cleft of a famous rock, I catch sight of a well-known prophet watching for God to pass by. In the wind, mayhap? Multitudes never think of God except when a storm racks their habitation. "But the Lord was not in the wind." In the earthquake, then, as at Lisbon, more recently? No, "the Lord was not in the earthquake." And after the earthquake, a fire. Surely now God was to be known. Yet "the Lord was not in the fire." "And after the fire a still small voice"—quiet as lullaby, sweet as a mother's prayer, gentle as the kiss of a moonbeam. *That* was God. That *is* God. But

we look for him in the wrong places and at almost impossible times.

"So Arnold is dead," observed Stevenson, when the passing of the apostle of sweetness and light was reported to him: "Arnold won't like God." Just what the antipathy would be, Stevenson leaves to the imagination. But it is perfectly easy to say why multitudes now don't "like God." He is too quiet in his ways, too patient, too unostentatious. Strident, noisy, we should like him better. We are lovers of the ceremonial and spectacular, not to say the mechanical. In celestial orchestration, an anvil chorus holds us spellbound, when an æolian whisper leaves us unthrilled. Let God *shake* a mountain, and we fall into awe. Let him set the same hillside smiling with heather or tinkling with the bell-minstrelsy of a hundred brooks, and we find it difficult to "remember our Creator."

It is the old antithesis between artisan and artist. Factory site or meadow—take your choice. You cannot have both on the same patch of ground. If spindle or sawmill yields the music you love best, build a factory on your meadowland and employ mechanics. But if "a poem hangs on the berry bush," poem and philosophy and the eternal mystery of growth, then keep your soil for God to show

his quiet wonders in. On a one-time bit of bottomland, across which the northern song birds used to call to me, and up from which flower-faces and oat-stalks poked miraculously, now stands a prosperous granite cutter's shed. 'Tis a noisy place, albeit exceedingly interesting. All day long, save Sundays and holidays, one may hear blow of mallet and ring of steel, or the monotonous rumble of polishing machines. Very wonderful and profitable things are made there—monuments, pillars, tablets, and all that. But for me nothing that comes forth from that soundful shed compares in start and surprise with the living things God used to coax from that same soil in response to sun and shower. I like factories of course. They interest me. I believe in them—in their place. Doubtless my liking would increase if I chanced to own stock in one of them. But, frankly, I like them least when they seem to elbow out of his special province the Matchless Artist and Grower.

Artificer or artist: the distinction coupled with our obvious preference is intensely illuminating. It explains, for example, the hard road evolution, as a thesis, had to travel. We were brought up to believe in a noisy Creator; a Thor with his terrible hammer; a God of irruption and catastrophe. The more

commotion he made the more certain we were of his deity. Our cosmogony was not untruthfully described as a carpenter-shop affair, full of racket and expedient and waste. When God realized the need of a tree or mammal he got busy and made it, the best he could; much as a tinker builds a screen for his window or a churn for his dairy. Creation was an impromptu business, and hazardous in the bargain. And we enjoyed it after a fashion. At least we accepted it. By general acceptance it had become orthodox. Whereas this later notion of a quiet, eternally foresighted Father, shaping through silent æons a seed or a man; growing, at the crest of the ages, a bloom so radiant as to justify and interpret the patient, mystifying process—this did not appeal to us. To tell the truth, it affronted us; and we cried "Anathema" against Astruc and Darwin, Miller and Abbott, with all the rest of its proponents, whether in the church or out of it. We could not seem to acclimatize ourselves to the idea of a quiet, orderly God. Of course the case is different now, except with William Jennings Bryan, for example. We have gotten used to the idea; slept with it, so to speak, and waked to find it true. Demonstrated or not, we really enjoy it. Instead of looking for God to do all sorts of capricious, haphazard and irrelevant things,

we have learned, in Lowell's fine phrase, "to take great comfort in God." Indeed, we are at the point of forswearing a Creator who falls into tantrums of anger and works by explosions of zeal. Thanks to science or philosophy or better sanity among us, and most of all to a richening appreciation of Jesus, we have a new theophany. "Day's at the spring," if not at full noon.

In certain other realms, however, we still blunder in the dark. Still we expect a nation or an institution to be *made* instead of *born*. Still the factory idea as against the *field*. In a recent "movie" three men are pictured as gathering old tin cans and carefully bestowing them in sacks, after the manner of a rag-picker. Later they are seen emptying the bags in the supply room of a Ford plant. Then, presto! three shiny Ford cars are turned over to them, made of the tin cans of course. Absolutely farcical—and no feelings hurt, not even Henry Ford's. Farcical or inane, according to the spectator's mood. Yet not more ridiculous than the expectations which multitudes indulge concerning the appearance of a new world-order. Just a little material—and old, at that—plus a little machinery, noisy and perhaps fearfully complex; and behold, a new Mexico or a new Russia! Forgetting, for the moment,

the cost of it and the tragedy of it, nothing funnier than the experiment of Lenin and Trotsky has ever been seen. The film-farce just referred to is solid sense as contrasted with the vaunt of Bolshevism in Russia or anywhere else. Next we shall be told that the full explanation of Protestantism is in the theses nailed by a recalcitrant monk upon a certain church door; and that the United States of to-day, easily the leader of the world, were fully implicit in the Declaration of Independence.

Anybody with a handful of brains can assemble a string of truths wise enough to assure salvation to the race, if great principles could automatically bring in Utopia. Any group of reformers, sincere or subsidized by self-interest, taking knowledge of history alone, can invent legislative and economic machinery perfectly adapted to usher in the millennium, if millenniums came that way. Nothing, however, of lasting value to mankind is *built*. It must *grow*. The theater of human history is not a factory; it is a field. The greatest truth ever conceived by the mind of man is a relatively impotent or sterile thing. It is a seed. You must give it sun and soil and shower. Or, to change the figure, it must be personalized. Somebody must live it, must set it palpitant and vital

and compelling before his fellows. The explanation of Lutheranism is not theses but Luther and his coadjutors witting or unwitting. The explanation of Mars partially discrowned is Foch, with millions of men ready to die at his word. Whatever the world shall yet be, in fraternity, in justice, in dream and deed, it will not be cobbled into by brains however acute and hands however adroit. "The new heaven and new earth in which dwelleth righteousness" will be a development, a growth. We shall come to it as a rose reaches its glory, as a child becomes man. Not upon devices and mechanics, however ingenious, rests the hope of the world. Rather upon life ever expanding and dynamic, despite reversions; life capable of transmitting, into the throbbing gold and crimson of its dream, even the dark mold of buried hopes and the wild storms that besiege it. Not manufactory, but meadow.

Or, take the same truth in another familiar aspect. Set it against the background of school and college. Now it is a vacation. But soon there starts again a procession thousands of miles long. Twenty-two millions in line in our country alone; some glad, more of them indifferent, still others refractory, but all headed the same way—back to school. Interesting, prophetic throng, the most commandingly

significant in the world. Concerning such a multitude, an alarmist voice cries that seventy-five per cent are physically deficient. I do not dispute the estimate. In fact, the percentage is so high as to be reassuring, in a way. If the statistician had named twenty or thirty per cent as his figure, one might be more disturbed. But a three-quarter ratio means, practically, that perfect bodies and minds are few, a fact which all must reckon with. The normal human organism is blemished in some part or other. Over against a host of almost incredible wonders of adjustment and function must be set the imperfections we inherit or acquire. I suppose there are few perfect leaves in a forest, as certainly there are few perfect gems in any mine; and no perfect tools at all. Life's work must be done with imperfect implements and on imperfect material. So I am not in panic over the assertion that three out of four pupils are flawed. My personal conviction is that the percentage is set too low. What does concern me, however, is the sort of institution toward which that vast procession moves when it goes to school. Factory or field, which is a school? Artisan or agriculturist, which is your average teacher? Metal to be hammered into conventional shape and stamped with the name of the process, or

life to be nurtured and ripened, which is the pupil? On the answer depends, in large degree, the result. Truth to tell, the average schoolroom is more like factory than farm: long on mechanics and short on vitalities. And it is easier to run a lathe in an educational mill than to evoke the best from a life, as a wise florist respects the individuality of each rosebush, that he may help it bear its consummate bloom.

As between the merits of the inductive and of the deductive methods of teaching—whether the pupil should learn a language before he is taught grammar or memorize a rule before he attempts to work a problem—I may properly hesitate to pass an opinion. Whichever method seems better calculated to deal with life in its most intricate forms, to bring out of it all the glory, all the strength that lies nascent in it, we owe to each of the twenty odd millions in the procession headed for school. I cannot recall the occasion of John Hay's laconic word; that, "to take a little child and conduct him to his own is better business for men and angels than swinging censers and loafing round a throne." But the phrases seem to fit the problem of education. To "conduct a child to his own" is essentially a vital process. It implies self-realization in terms of maximum

manhood and womanhood. The world does not need duplicates but personalities. I do not want to hear anybody else sing just *like* Jenny Lind or Mabel Garrison or de Reszke. I am not interested in replicas of Henry Ward Beecher and Arnold of Rugby and William E. Gladstone. God save us from small editions of illustrious records! He who sings or paints, pleads a case or teaches school, gives his friendship or mounts a cross just like anybody else, is by so much inferior to his own best. And the school or college whose highest credential is the good copies of great originals it produces fails of its full mission. Every great soul (and every small one) is, or was intended to be, "an unique." Factories cannot compass that; only the meadows of life.

The same cautionary distinction must be observed in the highest realm of all; with respect to rebirths of feeling, of moral accountability, of spiritual upreach. Taken at any stage of manifestation, such changes are growths, not factory-products. Yet the old mechanical concept persists. Folks seem to expect to be molded or hammered into a new likeness. "Father, what is the matter with that man?" queried a child concerning a penitent who was groaning and convulsing at an old-fashioned "mourners' bench." "Hush," was

the reproachful reply; "he wants to be a good man." "Well, why don't he?" persisted the questioner. I do not know the answer furnished upon that embarrassing occasion. But anybody can guess. That laboring penitent had missed the essentially quiet and personal nature of all such reconstruction. The emergence of a better self knows no such thing as "style" in the process. From a stray seed, or a new ideal dropped into the soil by unwitting or even unfriendly hand, or blown by the wind of so-called chance, the new manhood or womanhood grows. It is as vital, as individual, as different as any particular plant in a garden. Clamp it; try to make it conform, and you will kill it eventually. Tell Melanchthon he must emulate Luther, or Charles Wesley he must be like John, or Sam Hadley he must take pattern from Jerry McAuley, and, in the event, you secure neither the one nor the other. All you have is a manikin, morally pulseless and impotent—factory-made. Alas, that even here Emerson's drastic words are true!—"The virtue in most request is conformity. Society loves not realities and creators, but names and customs. Who would be a man must be a non-conformist."

Amid the welter of manufactured words which, sometimes clever enough, seek to arrest,

for advertising purposes, a jaded attention, take this: "Style-plus." One can fancy the snort of Carlyle at the irony of it. In its special use, what is the "plus" as applied to "style" in clothes? Whatever else it means, it certainly does not imply individuality. To be individual in personal garb is to be *out* of style. To be like everybody else on the street, in habiliments, or, at least, to be undistinguishable in the exclusive set, for cut of coat or number of buttons on a waistcoat or shape of headgear, is a prime social requirement. For his invariable white suit and his button-holed sunflower, I can partly forgive Oscar Wilde some of his faults. We do not need any more slaves of style; particularly in affairs of the soul. Let the Creator speak—only making sure that it is the Creator speaking; as when he calls up a lily from river's ooze, or challenges an orchid to outdo its fellows in beauty. Let the Creator speak, through litany or history, through retribution or resurgent great dream, through pain or joy. The answer of life is growth, soundless as stars, personal as friendship, more worthful than aught or all that human skill can fabricate.

XI

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW

I DO not permit anybody to tell me *what* I like, whether in food or furnishings or friendship. Doubtless, I may need an apologist *for* my likes. They may be execrable enough to inflame an accredited connoisseur. At least they are mine, subject to revision of course. But I am not more open to conviction on the subject than as to which among a thousand is my own nose. The latter may be Roman, Greek, Gothic, Norman, or of mixed architecture. It's the best I possess, particularly personal, and answers my purpose. So with my individual preference for autumn over spring, sea over mountain, and two lumps of sugar in my tea. These preferences are part of my aura; self-expressive, self-revelatory of what I am at the moment (and en route, mayhap, to better things). Conceivably I may change my mind. As someone observes, to change one's mind is incidental proof that one has a mind to change. But at the present or any subsequent writing, I like what I like, and there's an end on't.

Like many another modest mortal, I've been

punished enough endeavoring to align myself properly in the matter of taste. For years I half hoped and half feared that I might acquire a fondness for Wagner's music, apart from and beyond his Prize Song, his burst of joy in Siegfried, together with certain other passages. Musical mentors explained, expostulated, exhorted, or looked desperately sorry for me. They advised giant doses, as of Fowler's Solution; or treatment by indirection. Occasionally I fancied I saw a gleam of hope for the patient. He might be curable. But, up to now, I'd give all of Wagner, including Parsifal, for a few strays from Nevin, Grieg, and MacDowell, not to mention such elfin bits as Rubinstein's Melody in F and some of Mendelssohn's caressing measures. I do not permit anybody to interfere with my spontaneous reaction to the color or tone that reaches me.

Isn't this part of the disappointment of going on pilgrimage, in company, that one is expected to react to natural beauty or historic shrine precisely as his comrades do, or as the Baedekers prescribe? To dare be oneself in the sights he enjoys is a fine instance of self-respect. Of course one ought to be open to suggestion. He may easily miss a view, as of mountain or monument, without which he shall go poor to the end of his days. If a certain mirror in Holyrood

Palace, or the pigeons circling the dome of Saint Paul's, made deeper registry than all else I had seen that day, why argue with me? All I am protesting is the need of defending my preference for Northern trout-stream, wimpling and cold, as against Southern everglades; or of climbing roses in comparison with acres of cultivated blooms. All I am claiming is the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness in enjoyment of the simple things that set me strangely warm of heart, or raise in my throat an unaccountable but personally precious lump of tenderness and reverence. If I cannot compute the distance to Orion, or count the bacteria in a drop of water or a historic event, let me measure, in personal paces, the path to some wooded altar or to the house of a friend.

Or, as in the present instance, appraise a picture for what it is worth to *me*. The canvas referred to is Frank Russell Green's "Silvery Moonlight." Whether it is a notable work of art or no, I am unaware; nor interested to ascertain. It may be one of those passing productions which mean little except to the painter—and to me. But I like it. And I like it best for a certain unostentatious detail—the tiny, glowing window in the cottage in the background. Everything else in the picture is cold. Moonbeams silvering the water with a

wavy path of sheen; water itself touched by the chill fingers of night and frost; sky studded with cool gems—everything else cold, save the ruddy window yonder, and the ray it flings half shyly, like a beckoning finger, athwart the rippling stream. Cover the window or leave it dark, and you still have a beautiful scene; beautiful and cold, as so many beautiful faces and aspects are. Omit the sign of human life, and the residue is nonhuman, icily wonderful as frost-pictures are. Who would care greatly for the path of the moonbeams unless their brilliant path led to some welcoming door? What boots all splendor overhead and all impersonal glory roundabout if the pilgrim of the infinite must fare alone, uncheered by friendly presence, unspurred by heartening voice? For me the lighted window, as witness of human habitat and interest, makes the picture—as perhaps the artist intended. Always the welcoming gleam, or its equivalent, to render earth homelike.

Whether on a canvas or in its vast fact, inanimate nature is cold. Despite tropical suns and flooding effulgence, the air is desperately, pitilessly chill until *somebody* sets a light in the window. From their veranda, near Lake George, a friend writes rapturously about the view. Mountain piled against mountain in the

background, and in the intervening space a lake crystal clear. I could almost smell the breath of the woods, and see the summits silhouetted in the water. With an attent ear I could hear the feathered tribe lift their orison to returning day. Yet I wondered just how much the outspread beauty would mean to its ecstatic beholder if their only child lay dead in the house; or if there were none to summon, even by graphic pen, to *share* the beauty. With stroke of pestilence or touch of the Pale Rider one could blot out all the glory for my friend. Leave out the human faces that welcome ours; let the echo of the lost, dear voice die away among the solitudes, and the loveliness remaining would matter as little to the survivor as do the heaped-up roses and the haunting cadences of Chopin's Funeral March, to the pulseless object of such tribute. Even the recluse, Winslow Homer, self-exiled with his pigments and the lure of the sea, resenting the slightest intrusion upon the privacy of his nature-worship, painted for folks. Had there been none left to love his brush-caught glimpses of sky and ocean, I make certain he would have flung his palette into the surf. As Harnack phrased it, "Only the personal can help the personal," because only the personal can call to or be called by the personal. All lift, all

comfort, all inspiration carries an overtone of the human. Always the light in the window before the heart really sings.

In a recent delicious volume the author conjectures what sort of world this would be if, instead of the *genus homo*, some other order of animates had gained ascendancy. Suppose the ant with its incredible industry had inherited the earth? Or the feline, stealthy, implacably cruel, for whom, in sinister sense, "the night shineth as the day"? Or the elephant with his gigantic strength and vast patience? Or suppose any other genus you choose, filling earth with it, having an overlordship such as we so easily accept and assert. I cannot imagine just what token the reigning dynasty would require in place of our flushed window. But some sign of the tribe, some eloquent witness of kinship, some call of the blood, some language left unspoken after hills and streams and sunsets had their say. Perhaps the cat would come nearest to putting up with an otherwise tenantless world. Of all created orders the feline lives most alone. But even the tiger calls, sometimes, for his kind. And, for the rest of us, barring hermits and misanthropes, life without glimpse or assurance of the light in the window would be worse than death.

The lighted window—apparently not even God would attempt to paint his dazzling splendors of earth and sky without it. Measuring as astronomers do, 'tis a small house in which the light is kindled. No occasion for us handful of humans to feel unduly puffed up. Earth is a mere speck in the cosmos; and we who take so seriously our loves and hates, our hurts of body and smartings of soul, are relatively smaller than the ephemera dancing madly in the sunlight. And yet—and yet—for some reason which we may not attempt to fathom, creation did not seem complete to God until, in a dim patch of background, he had set a human light. All the lush extravagance of prehistoric ages; its flora and fauna, its forests primeval, its dinosauria and icthyosauria, with what more the archæologist tells in his amazing story, constituted an unsatisfying product. Something was missing from the whole. Not until the Creator had placed, in the fabled Garden of Eden, a man and his mate, to use and interpret and love it together, did he pronounce his handiwork "very good." Which is merely another way of saying that the ruddy, outshining window makes the picture.

So when we use a much longer measuring rod. *Astronomically* viewed, the firmament is intensely interesting. *Humanly* considered, it

means as little to us as the pattern on a ceiling or the tapers in a huge chandelier. Jupiter with his moons, Saturn and his ring, Sirius, Beda, and all the rest of the shining host—save one—speak a foreign tongue. But that *one* holds us in a sort of wistful thrall, like a humanly kindled light in a clearing. When the telescope adds a few millions to the number of stars, our pulse quickens not a beat. But when serious-minded astronomers speak of the Martian canals, and even go so far as to talk of intercepted signals from the ruddy planet to our own, we feel our breath catch a little. Probably we never shall be sure; but the bare suggestion, based upon scientific data, that, sixty millions of miles away, are folks who dream and love and suffer and die as we do, picks out Mars from all his neighbors; puts it on the map of our hearts. What happens to the rest of the universe is, for most of us, a matter of comparative unconcern, so long as each whirling sphere holds to its orbit, and comets trail their ghost-like skirts at safe distances from us. For the red planet, however, notwithstanding its martial traditions and implications, we entertain a different regard. Neighborliness, almost; as if, conceivably, we might be able to exchange greetings with those far-off folks, or fund our loans at their banks,

or work their mines in interest of earth-comfort. In other words, Mars is a sort of hypothetical window set in the cold dark of the vast outer spaces.

"Oh, is it not enough to be
Here with this beauty over me?
My throat should ache with praise, and I
Should kneel in joy beneath the sky.
. . . . . .
I for whom the pensive night
Binds her cloudy hair with light;
I for whom all beauty burns
Like incense in a thousand urns;
Oh, beauty, are you not enough?
Why am I crying after love?"[1]

Or see the same truth in another aspect. Came the great war, the Armageddon of the ages. As a spectacle merely it might vie with some prehistoric cataclysm of nature, or with the convulsion which blotted out Herculaneum and Pompeii. I can fancy a spectator, watching, from some safe upper seat, the massing of men by millions, the spout of flame from steel mouths, poisoned gases spreading like sea-frogs across No Man's Land, huge vultures of metal swooping and striking with terrible beak, seamonsters dealing murderous blows to great ships. Nothing like it was ever seen on earth before; and, please God, never will be again. As spectacle it passes description, as its horrors

[1] Sarah Teasdale, in the North American Review.

and agonies are beyond recital. Imagination goes faint before the mammothness of it. But let no declamatory pacifist lose glimpse of the ruddy window yonder. If no previous war ever involved such ghastly carnage, none ever evoked such sympathy, chivalry, idealism, and on so vast a scale. Never before were grim battlefields lighted with such human glory. Always the gleam of the window, of course, since first man ceased to be mere brute. David's yearning cry over his dead foe; Nelson's "Kiss me, Hardy," as death clouded his vision; Sir Ralph's insistence that the blanket on which he lay dying should be returned that very night to Duncan McGregor, who would need it when his chief was gone—these are random instances from an indescribably beautiful page. But such instances were fitful, precarious, and too few. In this latest war sympathy was organized, recognized, forwarded by the same military machine that dealt the cruel blows. And the spirit which found immortal expression in Red Cross activities, in the preciously prompt and tender ministries of the Salvation Army and kindred bodies, came to white flame as between foe and foe. None but the Recording Angel has complete tally of the humanly flung windows that sent their healing homeward-beckoning ray through the

gloom. I cite but a single instance. Between two wounded Boches whom he hated with all his boyish soul, lay an American lad, also sorely wounded. He was trying to read a letter from home. And from his unsteady fingers there fluttered to the floor part of the missive. With a sharp cry he realized his inability to recover the lost sheet. Just then, one of his neighbors, a German officer, at cost of physical agony, stooped from his chair, gathered up the precious document and handed it to the boy, adding wearily, "I've got three lads of my own at home." What a flash from heaven! What a glowing window in the dark! Just the simple glory that burns in human breasts and breaks out of a brother's eyes! When that redeeming glow spreads widely enough the night of terror and loneliness will have gone for aye.

I can fancy such a consummation in statecraft. Up to now diplomacy has been a dark thing mostly—crafty, essentially cruel. Open covenants, openly arrived at, were the chimera of those who do not know the stake or the game. Nor, for sake of example, need one travel back as far as the Dark Ages. No forest encounter between wolf and cougar could be more calculatingly cruel and clever than the battle of wits as between nations. An observant visitor from another planet would never guess

that, according to our confession, "God sits in heaven," and that national tribunals have souls. Diplomacy is delphic when it is not diabolical. "Let him take who can," is its motto. As a sort of patronizing apology, as for the *faux pas* of children, it used to be said that America did not understand the art of international diplomacy. I hope the unintended compliment is still valid. To be skilled in the craft of making your rival believe you mean a different thing from the thing you really intended; to leave him to discover that you are to be trusted just as far as you can be seen or compelled, is about as high praise as the fame of being the best counterfeiter in the country. We of America do not wish initiation into the mysteries of international lying and chicane. Better a thousand times the blunders and penalties of honesty! To this day the old world does not quite credit us with idealism rather than lust of land in our war with Spain. Even an accredited ambassador to England offered a rather unflattering clue to our entry into the World War. But the signs are changing —for the better. Already faint rays of a worthier spirit are beginning to pierce the gloom. There's a light in the window yonder. Real brotherhood is kindling and tending it. And behind the dimly outlined walls of "the

house by the side of the road" is the Face of the Son of Man.

Said Elihu Root recently: "The world is full of hatred and strife and murder to-day because of the incapacity . . . to receive the truth. It is not a matter of intellectual power; it is not a matter of learning; it is not a matter of precept; it is a matter of the development of character. The development of character must come by exercise of the human virtues that make it—mercy, compassion, kindly consideration, brotherly affection, sympathy, unselfish willingness to sacrifice for others." The light of that sort of spirit is as much warmer than the steely flash of diplomacy as the glow of a hearthstone outwelcomes the glint of a star.

So, as between classes, in the tense, industrial struggle of to-day. What the ordinary employee is missing, though he may not so admit, is the light in the window. Once, in a very personal and humanizing sense, he had an employer. That employer might be mean, grasping, implacable. But, at the worst, he was presumably human. Theoretically, he could be approached with protest or plea. Nowadays the employee is hired by a superintendent, who in turn is employed by a local manager, who takes his orders from an absentee committee, perhaps. Vary the details as we may, the groundwork

is practically unchanged. Modern industry is, like many of its integral parts, a machine, huge, intricate, almost awe-compelling, but seemingly undirected by a human hand, and still less inspired by heart. Heart must come back into view. For the sake of best work, the toiler at loom or lathe, in office or on the roadway, needs to feel that he is working *for somebody*. Nearly everyone wants a "boss," a very personal, approachable boss. Abstract duty is an exceedingly cold master. Obligation to a machine is long at eight hours *per diem*. When one works for daily bread only, with its concomitants, he may earn it as cheaply as possible. I am perfectly certain that my doorman or my clerk will do *for me personally* a better day's work than for an anonymous employer—and with a smile, perhaps. The face must be seen, or the light which heralds it. Employment personalized, backed with justice and hued with brotherliness and sweetened by sense of sympathy, is not slave-toil; it is love-work, the finest in the world. Through the murk of misunderstanding, across the chilly waters of monotonous toil, the ruddy window must fling its gladdening beam.

And so, of course, with respect to the more intimate contacts of man and man. Social life, so called, is hardly deserving of its descrip-

tion. Mostly, it is complex, reticulated, mechanical, austere. If anything else can be stiffer than is the conventional social function, or the ordinary commerce of an average day, I do not want to meet it. To be sure, genuflections are less numerous than the Oriental's, and our self-abasements not so obvious. Yet, from the casual contacts of social exchange one comes away chilled. I hate to admit how automatic are our social conventions. A wooden man, properly articulated and controlled, could go through our motions as effectively and as convincingly as we. The slot-machine has nothing on most folks. Deposit your money, your "good morning," your hospitality, and you know, beforehand, just what to expect, provided the mechanism functions. For a ten-per-cent tip your restaurant waiter inclines his head slightly, and scoops in your money. For twenty per cent he smiles and looks almost human. For a still larger fee he is embarrassingly obsequious. I'd just as soon have a tray pushed at me by a machine. And the pity is that restaurant servitors are not much less vitally human than their patrons. Too many rules, too many formularies, too many conventions out of which the spark of life has died. Society is marvelously organized but piteously cold. It needs more heart, more

spontaneity, more flash of the sheer human. Even affection speaks too often by rote. But somewhat in me rises joyously to meet the real throb in a human voice, the untransferable light of a friendly face. The flash of a ruddy window helps me through the gloom of the darkest night of life.

XII

THE OILER

I WONDER how he happened to be omitted by Kipling. That panegyrist of the "unhonored and unsung" seems to have passed by the oiler. Grimy mechanics, noisy riveters, Tommy Atkinses, stevedores, coolies, with all the rest of the submerged, find honorable mention. But not the oiler. I wonder why. Yet, for that matter, I wonder how I myself happened to miss him until recently. For the paradoxical reason, I suppose, that ordinarily he does his work without complaint and without default. Sad to say, and altogether humiliating, that to play one's part faithfully is about the surest way to fail of particular praise. Sad to say, and still more humiliating, no substitute for dereliction, as a means of attracting attention, has been discovered. Night after night the sentry paces his monotonous beat, back and forth, back and forth, and nobody yields him more than a passing thought. It is when he falls asleep or leaves his post that his importance becomes manifest.

God be thanked for a worldful of dutiful servants of the public weal; switchmen, track-

walkers, lookouts, bridge-tenders, policemen, fire-laddies, letter-carriers, milkmen, coast-patrolmen, dish-washers, street-sweepers, coal-passers. They play their respective parts to keep in motion the intricate mechanism of the modern day. While the rest of us sleep or play or plan conspicuous campaigns, they "watch" if they do not "pray." Early and late, heat or frost, we take them for granted in their unheralded places. Naught less than a strike or a fateful dereliction picks them out for the public eye. Really, a world in which so huge a majority can be depended upon to do their duty, is not a half bad place. Moreover, the publicity given to a single instance of neglect is the greatest possible compliment to the steadiness, at his post, of the average man.

I wish, however, that the compliment were not so commonly paid by indirection. I wish, for example, that a record of unostentatious fidelity, rather than an outbreak of insubordination, made "good copy" for the newspapers. I wish we knew how to pay as much heed to the coal-miner at his dreary, choking task as we do when, like Achilles on strike, he sulks in his tent. I wish we were as keen to express admiration as to visit displeasure. I wish there were some practical method of cheering men at their humdrum tasks instead of cursing

them for their outbreaks against a deadening monotony. Gladstone had time to visit a street-sweeper in his home. Theodore Roosevelt made it his rule to shake hands with the locomotive-engineer at the end of a journey. Marshal Foch let the common soldiers feel the dignity of their task. Whereas, most of us *assume* fidelity to be the rule, like the steadiness of the sun's heat, and pass on. And as a humble toiler confessed to me bitterly, "The world doesn't know that I'm alive so long as I do my duty."

The avidity of criminals, of high and low degree, for published accounts of their offenses has often been noted. It does not follow that saints are less avid of conspicuous mention. I have known but one man who said he never read newspaper comments upon himself—and I am not quite certain of his veracity in the matter. But the easy way for the underworld to break out of oblivion into print is by transgression. I wonder if the assured publicity adds zest to the crime. Perhaps Nero would rather be remembered for his vices than forgotten in his virtues; and Guiteau written conspicuous among the damned than merely lumped with other unheralded ushers at Moody's meetings five years earlier; and Trotsky pilloried as a monster of inhumanity

by the world at large than lost in the crowd of quiet Russian peasants. Such is not the whole story of course. Without an eye to witness their defiance you shall have criminals by cold intent. I do not suppose that Cain was seeking the memory of the ages to come when he killed his brother; nor that a certain French "Bluebeard," recently executed for his ghastly crimes, was lusting for fame. Still is it true that all normal folks hate the dull obscurity into which they pour the strength of their days and the crimson of their sacrifices. "A cup of cold water in the name of a disciple" loses part of its reward when it elicits no acknowledging smile. And a hard day's work or a long night's vigil is inadequately recompensed when all it draws are wages and sense of duty well done.

"If with pleasure you are viewing any work a man is doing,
If you like him or you love him, tell him now;
Don't withhold your approbation till the parson makes oration
And he lies with snowy lilies o'er his brow.
For no matter how you shout it, he won't really care about it;
He won't know how many teardrops you have shed:
If you think some praise is due him, now's the time to slip it to him,
For he cannot read his tombstone when he's dead."

I believe in compliments. I believe in praising a fellow being when he pronounces an

eloquent oration, or sings divinely a song, or hits any other shining mark. But I believe also in recognizing the fidelity of those who polished his boots and helped him to catch his train. If the bread is light, if the new garment pleases you, if the expressman delivers your parcel on time, say so. God does that kind of thing. Every harvest field is his compliment to the planter, paid so loud that the entire neighborhood can hear. Set a rose-cutting in the soil, and God smiles his pleasure in a half-hundred blooms. Do a good day's work or make somebody happy, and the music in your own heart is God singing his praise of you.

But my present interest does not extend to the whole race of the unnoticed and unthanked. I am thinking of the oiler as exemplified to me in a member of his tribe, not long ago, in a certain engine room. An engine has fascinated me, from childhood. All I can recall of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition is a maze of buildings and the famous Corliss engine. In such a massive and potent creation I could see more of Deity than in a wheat field or a forest. In those juvenile days I could have forgiven both Watt and Fulton for prostrating themselves in worship before the wonder of their handiwork. My most treasured possession was a toy stationary engine. The spiteful steam-

jets of its tiny exhaust made sweeter music for me than Theodore Thomas could produce with his full orchestra. To that clever toy I brought my morning orisons and evening adorations. It typified the great god of the big engine, as, for the Buddhist, a tiny eikon represents Gautama. And the larger the engine the more complete my reverence. Many the hour have I spent, spellbound, before the shining, rhythmic machinery that drives a steamship. To tell the truth, I was indulging that old bent when I happened to notice the oiler.

The vessel was a Sound liner, the queen of her fleet. And her engines were correspondingly worth watching. The marvel is that men dare to house, over a ship's bottom, and with merely a skin of metal between the sea and the pistons, thousands of horse power in action. The daring of it, the intricacy of contrivance, the harnessed vehemence, the rush fairly made me dizzy. I quite easily could have saluted the chief engineer as high priest at the altar of power. Indeed, I did manage to extract from him a few condescending remarks, he the celebrant and I the poor votary at his shrine. With only less deference I thought of his assistants and acolytes in his booming temple. I went so far as to give an admiring thought to the stokers, out of sight and mostly out of mind, feeding

the fiery mouths of the power-god. Everybody except the oiler; he never occurred to me. And just then he appeared, overalled, silent, sure of foot, with his oil can and handful of waste. Doubtful if he realized that he had just been "discovered," so to speak. Without self-consciousness and with easy grace, he lifted the rod from a huge grease-cup to test its heat, tamping the oil-soaked waste. Yonder, as in a sort of affection, he felt of a housing. Again he waited for one of the great cranks to swing within reach, spurting oil at it, with almost incredible dexterity, as it rushed past him. Then he disappeared as noiselessly as he came to return in a few minutes in repetition of the same careful round. All through the night, while furnaces roared and wheels beat a pleasant taps for sleep, until the ship lay quiet at her pier, he or his mate continued the quiet yet indispensable service.

Indispensable is the word. The more perfect the bearings and the more puissant the mechanism, the more piteous the destruction without the oiler. Unlubricated, that beautiful monster of steel and brass would tear itself to pieces, like a mighty animal whose strength is turned against itself. Every driver of an automobile learns the lesson, if not from his teacher, then by costly experience. Gas in the tank, water

in the radiator, oil in the crank-case—these three; and the greatest of these is the last. Lacking the first, he may have opportunity to laugh—or otherwise—at himself, five miles from the nearest service station. Lacking the second, he will be warned, probably, before serious damage is done. But lacking the third he may literally burn out his engine. Nothing, from a dollar watch to a Niagara turbine, runs without adequate lubrication. All honor then to the oiler, and a chaplet for his oft-grimy brow! Henceforth I shall think of him as among the indispensable servants of his kind; especially when he practices, outside the engine room, his vital function.

Life everywhere needs his counterpart. I believe that one of the most serious menaces of our amazing social mechanism is lack of skillful and timely lubrication. Usually, life as we meet it and live it is potent enough. Its boilers seethe with pent energy. It is contrived for immense service; for the lightening of myriad loads and the shortening of countless journeys. So far as mechanics can compass it, ours should be the happiest of all the ages. We are circumstanced for immense felicity. Let anyone attempt to tally the adjustments and adaptations of the twentieth century, its physical easements and safeguards, and he will

lose his breath in amazement before his count has proceeded far. Yet, in a multitude of ways, the huge social enginery is behaving badly. It squeaks and pounds with threat to its own safety. Its rush and enterprise but augment the peril. We are hastening somewither; but is it the triumphant end of a voyage or a catastrophe in mid-ocean?

About the worst calamity to the old side-bar buggy in which our fathers courted our mothers, or the hay-wagon with its sweet-savored load, was a protesting groan if the axles went ungreased. If one did not object to the noise, he could drive on. Indeed, it may be said that life, in its simpler aspects, required less oiling—though I think that, even so, our sires were more careful to apply lubricant. But modern life is high-geared, vehement, and more intrically set. Whether viewed in small or large units, its machinery calls for oil, calls more imperiously than for further increments of power. There are convictions enough, albeit stiff, too oft, with chill or superheating. Most people can get up steam quickly in defense of their rights or in pursuit of personal advantage. Our enterprises as well as our desires are hot of foot. It is oil we need: oil in the right place, at the right time, of the right sort. I mean the "oil of gladness," of a "soft answer" which

still "turneth away wrath," of kindly wit, of tactfulness, of high diplomacy, of mutual concessions. Oil in the home, in the office, in church, in state—oil, oil, oil! To paraphrase a familiar couplet:

> "'Tis *oil* of which our nerves are scant.
> 'Tis *oil*, more oil for which we pant."

Strange that folks who would not attempt to run a sewing machine or a lawn mower unlubricated, act as if a domestic establishment or a government had no need of the oiler. I chanced in a shop, recently, when a machine was brought in for repairs. Like a certain famous chariot, it "drave heavily." It clattered and labored as if in mournful protest. And the mechanic winked and said, "Oil, I guess. That's all." That's all that ails a host of laboring human enterprises. They need oiling.

Homes, for example. What the modern home needs more than it needs additional income or piano or hard-wood floors is the ministry of the oiler. A little lubricant would enable folks to secure, from small revenue, a surprising mileage of happiness. I remember days when few homes were complete without a motto, in cardboard or silk, "God Bless our Home." They were garish things, and "had their day and passed away." Nor have I any super-

stitious notion that God needs an embroidered invitation to bless a fireside. That is his business, and without formal challenge. But it seems as if he had better success in blessing nineteenth than twentieth-century homes. And I suspect that when the gaudy motto-prayer was answered, you might have found, co-operative with God, some unostentatious oiler. Mother, most likely. What an expert the old-fashioned mother was at easing the bearings! She seemed to know precisely where a drop of understanding could save a situation. Sometimes a restraining touch, an inscrutably indulgent smile, a love-winged word or a bit of gentle banter sufficed to set the domestic machinery functioning smoothly again. Just as she smoothed a pillow as none other could, and made a slice of toast taste like food for the gods, so by high instinct she knew the point of friction. In those simpler, unemancipated days she did not ask to run the engine. She had not discovered the need of herself in politics and trade. She was content, apparently, with the humble *rôle* of oiler—which so many of her daughters, and particularly her granddaughters, spurn.

"Have you a little fairy in your home?" runs a modern advertisement. I may beg to hope so, especially as that sort of a "little

fairy" is a miraculous oiler. Now, I like a *dog* in the house. I am rather extravagantly fond of canines. I admire a real dog so thoroughly that, occasionally, I am at the point of agreeing with a certain gentle cynic's confession, "The better I know men, the more I like dogs." A dog is good company, *in lieu of better*. But I could not conscientiously recommend a dog as a domestic tranquillizer—at least, not in the same class with a baby. There comes before me the face of a whilom parishioner, a handsome *pater familias*, of warm heart but precarious temper. He was the sort of man to turn thunderous upon slight provocation. And when the storm broke let the household seek shelter! All except his baby girl. She was as unafraid as an angel. Defying the flash in his eyes and the roar in his voice, I have seen her climb into his arms, fairly choke him with her sweet, white arms, and then poke fun at his rage, smiling the while. And then the sun came out, and life moved on. As Field sings it:

> "My heart were stone could it withstand,
> The sweetness of my baby's plea."

Dear, divine little oiler. If for no other reason, there should be children in the home. I know that recreant men and women have torn themselves loose from the clinging arms

of their babies, and have rumbled on to perdition. But, on the other hand, countless domestic establishments have been saved to their ideals and to society by the presence of God-given little oilers of creaking machinery.

Sometimes it is a man of sunny humor and expansive kindness who is called to play the part. Every successful business house, every efficient organization needs such a wizard of quick diplomacy. Always there are sharp corners. Always there are rocks in the midstream. Often an *impasse*—and scope for the oiler; somebody to laugh in our solemn faces, and tell us, as Sherman did, that "the way to resume is to resume." Such an one reminds me of the famous Indian pilot on the Saint Lawrence Rapids. As a lad I made the trip with him, and thrilled with it. I remember the eagle eye and the arrowlike form and the alert hands. That any man could steer his craft past such threatening rocks, through such swirling waters, spuming and lashing, amazed me. One crash in particular set me shuddering —till I caught the look of that unafraid eye. I have met his counterpart in still more difficult undertakings. In particular, I recall him on a certain board. He always knew the way out; and usually it was very simple as he explained it. After we had floundered and befogged our-

selves by intemperate zeal, and had confused the real issue by "words without knowledge," he would rise in his place. I got to know that he *would* rise, and to expect it; a "gentleman of the old school," courtly, dignified yet invincibly gracious, quiet and measured of speech as if he were feeling his way, smiling as being sure of his goal. Again and again, in a few careful sentences comprehensive and often quizzical, he cut the Gordian knot for us. How I missed his stabilizing spirit when death touched him cold! He was a born and trained oiler. Like a skillful watchmaker, he knew just where to drop the lubricant. I never knew him to fail at starting the machinery into smooth action again.

Here was the real function of the court jester as you find him mirrored in Shakespeare and Marlowe, in Scott and Hewlett. I wonder who takes his place in the economy of more modern royal palaces. Despite his bells, his parti-colored costume, his dunce-cap and his often dwarfed body, he was charged with serious business. His to prick, with the stiletto of his wit, a ballooning vanity. His to save serious situations from becoming tragic. His to break ice with a jest well timed. His to release over-tense nerves. With his grotesque aspect and irresponsible tongue, he was to call back his

betters to sanity. At his best he was an oiler, ready and indispensable. Clown in name and function, I doubt if even he realized the high purpose he served.

Turning the pages of history, too, I find the oiler: at the court of Saint James, in the Tuileries, on the Palatine, in the White House. And, occasionally, the same great figure is both engineer *and* oiler. Pitt the younger, for example; and Cavour; Rousseau and Melanchthon; Wesley and Lincoln. To the last named, that lovely temple of memory, in Washington, chaste, splendid, affectionate, is inadequate tribute. Not often does God combine, in a single soul, the ministries of both prophet and pacificator. Abraham Lincoln was both, in startling degree. He had the driving power of a turbine like Luther; together with the gentle, sweetening touch of a Whittier. Rarely, save to a woman, is given the pervasive understanding, the art of harmony, as you shall find them in our American "Man of Sorrows." With more than a diviner's penetration he sensed the point of maximum tension. I love the picture that Drinkwater affords of that tall, ungainly, burden-crushed man, well-nigh frenzied with the cabals and mulishness of his Cabinet, bringing to their solemn table a newspaper with a droll story to read them. Wring-

ing a laugh out of his pain-twisted heart, that he might drop a bit of oil on the hot axles. And, to-day, the successors of those who lampooned him for levity and weakness vie with each other to pile his sepulcher with flowers whose breath is a most adoration.

And Lloyd George. It is too soon for assignment of his place in the history of the Great War and its aftermath. We are too close for a full view. In many ways he is the leading figure in the world to-day. That he suffers from the weaknesses of his most conspicuous talents is obvious, even to his friends. Apparently at the verge of overthrow, again and again, he has stepped back from the brink to secure footing. He has not won all he fought for, fortunately perhaps, he being a Britisher and not infallible. Yet who can say how many causes he has saved? He has brains—and to spare. He has iron-ribbed convictions, some of them narrow no doubt. He has a singularly fluent, persuasive tongue that has turned many a rout into a triumph. He has a lambent wit and a contagious smile. But in and through all is somewhat else—an astounding precipience, and a hand so adroit it were satanic if it were not conscientious. He is a consummate strategist, if not without guile, then with guile of a very sincere and salutary kind; a master-

oiler of harassed and laboring machinery. For England's augmented efficiency as the World War dragged on; for the cutting of red-tape and the scrapping of effete war-measures; for salvaging his country from the morass of postwar, industrial strife; for an approximation, even, to the solution of the problem of Ireland; for rescuing from total ruin the ponderous and elaborate machinery of Versailles, of Genoa, of Cannes, of London is the world under bonds of gratitude to Lloyd George, more than to any other living man.

But, topping and outshining all, is the Master-Harmonizer from whom all others have learned their alphabet. Without sacrifice of principle or the smallest shading of truth, he began oiling human axles, in an obscure Roman province, nineteen centuries ago. Say that he invented no governmental plans or social regimes; then say that he did a far more important and far-reaching thing. He showed how to lubricate the creaking wheels of the world order. And he provided the oil. He was astute, tactful, diplomatic in divine degree. He said he came "not to destroy but to fulfill." He spoke peace to all sorts of troubled waters. He was celestially clever, in the highest possible sense of that much-abused word. He raised no factitious issues, precipitated no un-

necessary or inconsequent clashes of order or authority. Himself "anointed with oil of gladness above his fellows," he devoted himself to a ministry of reconciliation. In a famous controversy concerning the payment of tribute; at the marriage feast when the festivities faltered for want of wine; in his defense of the woman dragged before him for condemnation; in his reappraisal of the value of a cup of cold water and a widow's two mites; in his treatment of the perplexed Nicodemus; by his restraint at his Last Passover, his silence at his trial, his unmatched magnanimity on his cross, he towers, across the ages, the Master Harmonist, the Genius of Peace.

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